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APPRAISAL'S ROLE IN MARINE CORPS  
CAREER MANAGEMENT.

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APPRAISAL'S ROLE IN MARINE CORPS

CAREER MANAGEMENT

By

William R. Etnyre

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Karl E. Stromsem, Ph. D.

Professor of Public Administration





## PREFACE

Formal appraisal activity began many centuries ago. Emperors of the Wei Dynasty (221-265 A.D.) were aided by an "Imperial Rater" who appraised the performance of the members of the official family; at a later date Ignatius Loyola established a procedure for formally rating members of the Jesuit Society. Since then career or performance appraisal, merit rating, ranking, etc., have progressed through many phases of development, attempting to relate to the various needs of succeeding generations.<sup>1</sup>

The scope of this paper is intended to show the evolution of appraisal within the environment of the Marine Corps, and the success with which it has met the needs of this generation.

In order to discharge successfully the responsibilities prescribed by law, the Marine Corps has found it necessary to establish and develop a professional cadre of commissioned officers. The Corps has undertaken the development of an officers' career management system, aimed at facilitating the accomplishment of the primary objectives established by law.

Career appraisal of Marine officers is an integral part of the established Marine Corps career management system, the philosophy of which is:

- (a) to attract the best officer material available;

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas L. Whisler and Shirley F. Harper (eds.), Performance Appraisal: Research and Practice (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1962), p. 423.



- (b) to provide a promotion system which will, upon identification, both advance the qualified officer and eliminate early and equitably the unqualified officer;
- (c) to provide officers a rotation of assignments and training to enable the identification of varied capabilities;
- (d) to provide further opportunities through education, training, and assignments to develop the best in such officers in accordance with Marine Corps needs;
- (e) to retain competent officers by providing incentives in the forms of assignments, advancements, and other rewards; and
- (f) to provide for proper promotion flow through the several officer grades to insure a vital officer corps at all times of sufficient quality and quantity to meet Marine Corps needs.<sup>1</sup>

In order to expedite the attainment of a career management system reflecting the above philosophy, development of career appraisal has been fostered and imposed as an administrative requirement. However, years before the development of a formal system of career appraisal, commanding officers found it imperative to rate or rank their officers and inventory their abilities. The introduction of a standardized appraisal system, late in the 19th and early 20th centuries, was intended to make the workings of career management more accurate, comprehensive, incisive and equitable to the officers concerned. The commander perceived in the

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Department of Defense, Report of the Department of Defense Ad Hoc Committee to Study and Revise the Officer Personnel Act of 1947, December 1960, p. 10.



appraisal instrument an opportunity for counseling and guiding his junior officers in order to make them more efficient and effective in accomplishing their assignments. At the same time the commander found he had acquired a powerful method of influencing not only today's actions but the ramifications of today's actions on future events. In short, he had acquired a tool to elicit conformity, grant rewards, influence performance, and record for posterity.

Potential rewards, however, require an associated sacrifice of some magnitude—money, time, individualism, effort, strain, and distraction. In a competitive environment those potential rewards would be required to offset the sacrifices and economic considerations; thereby, addressing the questions: Is the reward from the use of career appraisal great enough to warrant its continued use? What changes in appraisal methods would possibly ensure greater rewards? Has the career appraisal problem been faced intelligently? The Marine Corps career appraisal has not been required to answer these same questions. Indications are that the evolutionary development of career appraisal has been impervious to such competitive pressures. Rather, it has been completely insulated from the laws of necessity, and its explicit justification would seem to be the need to expedite a career management system through formal appraisal.

Perhaps this assessment is too severe; the most reliable evidence that career appraisal is needed and appreciated by society is its widespread use; almost all disciplines have adopted some form of career, performance, or merit appraisal. This does not necessarily indicate that all appraisal philosophies are optimum, however. An analogy would be the report card which schools in general use in one form or another. This system has survived in many different forms, despite an acute awareness of the negative





effect upon education. Similarly, it is very apparent that appraisal forms have changed and will continue to change and survive in the Marine Corps and society, despite gross inequities of their often unintended effects on the individuals most concerned. The important objective, therefore, is to center attention on the effects of past changes and center sophisticated knowledge on the development of future changes. The effectiveness with which the system adapts to eliminate today's dysfunction will be critical to tomorrow's viability.

The philosophy of career management within the Marine Corps has engendered a major role for the appraisal system. This role has evolved new philosophies over the years which have mitigated the initial unilateral purpose; each development has its day and influence.

There should always be a multiplicity of purposes permeating a career appraisal system with a dual reason for existence. Broadly speaking, two major purposes are suggested: (1) to evaluate the abilities, potential and resources of officers, and (2) to disclose to the officer where he stands so that he will be able to improve, or, being incapable of improvement, at least understand. The system that accomplishes both purposes objectively is optimum. However, an enigma often arises when the same appraisal tool is used to appraise objectives which are incompatible. The best appraisal method to decide if an officer is promotable is clearly not always the most utilitarian or expedient for stimulating officer growth and improvement. Ostensibly, such a condition exists in today's career appraisal system. To develop a clear prospective of the source of these countervailing influences and its development from a multiplicity of purposes, an overview of appraisal techniques seems warranted.





For years appraisal problems have monopolized the attention of commanders and administrators who rely on the appraisal to make career management decisions; and the researchers concerned with appraisal from a clinical viewpoint. Their attention was first directed to the earliest rating plans utilizing brief essay appraisal or word-check list from which the rater selected appropriate adjectival descriptions.<sup>1</sup> Of course these types of appraisal were devoid of consistency and were impossible to cross-compare. No explicit standard against which to base judgment was provided. At best it was a haphazard attempt to satisfy the major purposes of appraisal and to offset early inequities of appointment and promotion which were based on the individual officer's political, economic, ethnological, geographic, or other qualifications.<sup>2</sup>

The graphic rating scale was then developed as the result of intensive psychometric activity during World War I.<sup>3</sup> Such scales were relatively simple to use and provided a systematic approach to the always difficult job of reducing to a scaled response individual evaluative judgments. Early in the use of the graphic scales, however, the ominous reality of a negatively skewed rating distribution appeared to detract from its validity.

In a methodological attempt to eliminate these problems of skewness, the forced-distribution appeared.<sup>4</sup> The forced-distribution exponents philosophized that the performance of individuals in any unit should adhere to a normal distribution. This technique never met with wide military

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<sup>1</sup>Whisler and Harper, p. 430.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Department of Devense, Report of the Department of Defense, . . . , p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Donald G. Paterson, "The Scott Company Graphic Rating Scale," Journal of Personnel Research, December-January, 1922-1923, pp. 361. [Now called Personnel Journal.]

<sup>4</sup>Whisler and Harper, p. 431.



acceptance, possibly on the questionable grounds that a group having been screened through a selection process of necessity would manifest a negatively skewed distribution rather than a normal distribution. On these narrow grounds the relativity of the distribution of rating seems to have been ignored.

Next an attempt was made to develop interpersonal comparison into a much clearer focus. The paired-comparison techniques and other related ranking devices offered an opportunity to rank relative to the standing of individuals within a particular group.<sup>1</sup>

All these scaling techniques were clearly 1930 vintage. They manifested appraisal in terms of traits, personal qualities, or adjectival effusions which unfortunately engendered a high degree of unreliability. Another common limiting factor was the tendency of raters to anticipate the actions that would be triggered by their rating and, consequently, modify rating to produce the results they personally anticipated. These shortcomings and a host of others introduced a great deal of concern in the Marine Corps and elsewhere following World War II.

The last major development in career appraisals has been the critical-incident method.<sup>2</sup> This method focused upon the attempt to establish an objective basis for appraisal, based upon factual reports of past behavioral incidents. The use of the critical-incident appraisal created new problems of economy, time, and complexity; therefore it has met with a good deal of resistance.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 361-376.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 432.



From the study of a number of career appraisal systems, some general conclusions regarding the conditions under which effective appraisal may be accomplished are discernible:

- (1) The best systems emphasize the development of personal standards and base the appraisal upon achievement and efforts toward achievement.
- (2) The appraisal method employed must be correlated with the objectives sought.
- (3) The appraisal method should be economically feasible and compatible with its environment.
- (4) The appraisal method should be treated as an integral part of the organization's activity—not as a sporadic effusion.

The ability of the appraisal system used in the Marine Corps to accomplish these mutually important objectives has been impugned, by fact, canard, and demonstrated failure. The proponents of the present appraisal system maintain, with considerable justification, that despite many deficiencies it is the best career appraisal instrument available. So steeped in dogma is this complacent thought that little or no internal research is in prospect to examine the validity of the appraisal instrument to contribute to the accomplishment of the outlined career management objectives.

This study proposes to discount the accepted dogma and investigate the development of career appraisal in its functional role as an integral part of the officer career management system in the Marine Corps.





It is hoped that this paper will contribute to the unmasking of current appraisal limitations as they are manifested in present philosophy and practice.

Acknowledgment must be expressed for personnel at Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, the Chase Manhattan Bank, and the Library of Congress, who lent valuable assistance in conducting this study.

W.R.E.





# APPRAISAL'S ROLE IN MARINE CORPS

## CAREER MANAGEMENT

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE . . . . .	ii
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	xii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS . . . . .	xiii
Chapter	
I. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM . . . . .	1
The Problem	
The Problem's Ramifications	
Future Implications	
II. THE EVOLUTION OF MARINE CORPS CAREER APPRAISAL PRACTICES AND PHILOSOPHY . . . . .	14
Early Developments	
The Early Numerical Scale Problems	
World War I Influences	
Escalating Problems of the '40's	
The Sceptre of Skewness	
III. DEFICIENCIES INFLUENCING APPRAISAL . . . . .	47
Common Deficiencies of Rating Scales	
Deficiencies Common to Military Environments	
The Appraisal Instrument	
Judgmental Ability	
Appraisal Improvement	
IV. COMMUNICATION OF APPRAISAL RESULTS . . . . .	79
The Objective of Appraisal Communication	



V.	APPRAISAL IN A BROADER PERSPECTIVE . . . . .	97
	Today's Environment	
	Appraisal in Career Management	
	A Comparative Appraisal System	
	Appraisal Ramifications for Tomorrow	
VI.	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	131
	SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	137



## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Numerical Appraisal Scale . . . . .	18
2.	Percentage of Marine Corps Officers Receiving "Outstanding" Fitness Reports . . . . .	41



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Earliest Appraisal Report Form on File . . . . .	16
2. Early Marine Corps Appraisal Form - 1891 . . . . .	20-21
3. Appraisal Instrument Used During the 1930's and 1940's . . . . .	30-31
4. Critical Incident Report Implemented by General Order 72 and Cancelled by General Order 105 . . . . .	33-36
5. Career Appraisal Instrument Currently Used by the Marine Corps . . . . .	38-39
6. Percentage Distribution by Rank of Fitness Reports Received by Officers of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and 2d Marine Division . . . . .	42
7. Percentage of Regular Army Officers in Each Grade Receiving "Superior" Efficiency Rating - 1922-1945 . . . . .	44
8. Marine Corps Projected Time and Rank Distribution - July 1965 . . . . .	105
9. General Marine Corps Assignment Pattern for Officers	112
10. Chase Manhattan Bank's Officer Appraisal Report . . . . .	115-116
11. Chase Manhattan Bank's Overall Appraisal Categories for Management Inventory Purposes Only . . . . .	117
12. Chase Manhattan Bank's Planning Inventory . . . . .	118





## CHAPTER I

### ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

An organization is as good as the men who direct it. Consequently there is a critical importance associated with the system by which the human inventory is accumulated and the method by which it is made viable within an organizational structure. It can also be said that the totality of the organization transcends the sum of the aggrandized human parts, or, in other words, the whole is more than the total of the parts. Dynamic factors of morale, interpersonal relationships, vitality, esprit, etc., although not necessarily more important than the mechanics of organization, have profound effects and should be singled out for study and consideration in planning the objectives of the organization.<sup>1</sup> The harnessing of this dynamic potential and the kinetic energy provided by competent men, pivot on the ability to identify and appraise those attributes and apply them to the advantage of the organization.

Frederick R. Kappel, President, American Telephone and Telegraph Company, sums it up in the term "vitality."

What makes a vital business? Vital people make it.  
The very sense of the word vitality tells us it is wholly

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Department of the Navy, Bureau of Naval Personnel, Organization Planning for Naval Units, NAVPERS 18371A, 1964, p. 1.



an attribute of human beings. It is not to be found in things, in machines, or dollars, or material resources of any kind. Vitality is something people demonstrate through sustained competence; through creative venturesome drive; and through a strong feeling of ethical responsibility, which means an inner need to do what is right and not just what one is required to do.<sup>1</sup>

The scope of the dilemma does not terminate with Mr. Kappel's sagacious observation, however. As is true of many measurements in social science, the mathematically exact identification and measurement of the intangible qualities of performance, or Mr. Kappel's vitality, cannot always be isolated for appraisal. This fact has confounded and ineluctably mesmerized administrators and researchers for years. Inasmuch as precise mathematical measurements have been incompatible with appraisal, traits, merit, characteristics of human behavior, and performance have been appraised and comparative relationship established on a relative, structured scale.<sup>2</sup> Attempts to appraise or measure the contribution to attainment of overall organizational objectives by these structure scales have met with varying degrees of success and failure. The key has been the degree to which appraised categories of performance have been measurable and how salient to future growth.

This has nothing to do with a person's relative ability, or with the external recognition he may gain. This is something internal, a matter of character. It follows, I think, that a business that always looks carefully for this quality

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick R. Kappel, Vitality in a Business Enterprise (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Colonel Richard W. Fellows, "Merit Evaluation of United States Air Force Officers," (unpublished Master's thesis, Leland Stanford Junior University, 1948), p. 4.



of vitality in the people it employs, and weighs it importantly in promoting them, will grow strong more quickly and will keep building more strength for the future.<sup>1</sup>

This study is concerned with just such sophistication within the Marine Corps, and its relativity to the Officers Corps providing the nucleus of that organization. More specifically the study is concerned with the appraisal of officers' performance so that evaluative judgment can be made and reduced to recorded responses on structured appraisal instruments. Essentially this is the identification of the average Marine Officer thereby providing a frame of reference for ranking individuals and facilitating advancement through the leadership hierarchy. This advancement is critical to the success of the Marine Corps, because some of the young officers brought in at the bottom should be identified at an early stage for high responsibility and some must be terminated at early stages of their career. Appraisal techniques should identify good or bad, who is the meteor and who is simply traveling in elliptical orbit. Both types of officers are valuable and needed, and the line separating one from the other is a tenuous one not always distinguishable by the limited scope of appraisal philosophy.

Within the environment of American industry, Mr. Kappel has addressed the same problem on numerous occasions. In his remarks contained in the McKinsey Foundation Lecture Series he entertains these thoughts:

However, I also believe that there is some potential for growth of vitality in nearly all people. In some the potential may be slight, but it is there. A business can operate in ways that will contribute to the growth of vitality in the people who work for it. It can provide

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<sup>1</sup>Kappel, p. 8.





opportunities and incentives for work that are meaningful to the man who does it. It can set demanding and exciting goals. It can encourage relationships that are constructive and stimulating. It can support attitudes of independence and self-reliance. It can demand his best at all times.<sup>1</sup>

The Marine Corps also is capable of doing all these things. But will it do them? Will it follow a path that will build vitality in the individual officers? Has it the appraisal tools to separate vitality from adaptability? There are several significant signs which portend a vacuum of indifference relative to organizational vitality. If these signs are significant they will have salient influences on emerging career patterns.

The concept of the average officer becomes a focal point, activating an investigation of the importance of his unequivocal identification. The average officer has average abilities and traits and he performs his assignments in a characteristically average manner. He is an individual who can be hypothetically equated with the "standard man" of industry. He cannot be described with the accuracy demanded for exact mathematical measurement. In appraising his ability, the relationship is not only with inexact measurements but with personal bias, opinions, and judgments as they impinge on that measurement. Dependence on such untrustworthy tools to appraise the spectrum of possible performance is the crux of the problem of career appraisal.

The common deficiencies of present appraisal systems, in both civilian and military environments, hinge upon the failure of the appraisal system to hang the average appraisal on the average individual. The consequences being most active appraisal systems, surrender of reliability to fatuous reasonings and qualifications of why "average" does not

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8-9.





unequivocally mean average for this organization. What actually happens to the individual career-wise is ultimately determined not by his personal abilities but rather by his ability to emulate that fatuous image. Such an environment is created by the collaboration of administrative expediency and organizational indifference.<sup>1</sup>

Douglas McGregor sees a conventional approach to appraisal, such as used by the Marine Corps, as a continuous battle between the "have nots," and the "know nots." McGregor says:

The conventional approach, unless handled with consummate skill and delicacy, constitutes something dangerously close to a violation of the integrity of the personality. Managers are uncomfortable when they are not in the position of "playing God." The respect we hold for the inherent value of the individual leaves us distressed when we must take responsibility for judging the personal worth of a fellow man. Yet the conventional approach to performance appraisal forces us, not only to make such judgments and to see them acted upon, but also to communicate them to those we have judged. Small wonder we resist.<sup>2</sup>

By entertaining McGregor's thesis an immediate vision of thundering herds of reporting seniors remonstrating that "they" do not have any such qualms and, in fact, thrive on pronouncing evaluative judgments on individuals comes to mind. There is only the demonstrated inability of reporting seniors to distribute appraisal ratings and the imposed necessity of a clandestine reporting of appraisals to support my position.<sup>3</sup> Whether the structure or

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<sup>1</sup>Douglas McGregor, "An Uneasy Look at Performance Appraisal," Harvard Business Review, May-June 1957, pp. 90-91.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Records and Research Section, Historical Branch, HQMC, Marine Corps Officer Evaluation, 1866-1959, p. 11.



administration of the appraisal system is at fault is really of limited circumstances. The salient point is that the skewed results obtained indicate that the appraisal system has not adequately supported organizational needs.<sup>1</sup>

### The Problem

This study is concerned with the examination of the career appraisal in the United States Marine Corps. The problem is broached by attempting to gain incisive facts relative to the essence, nature, depth and salient implications of career appraisal and performance measurement techniques within the Marine Corps as they motivate and impinge upon the career officer. In approaching this problem, the validity and reliability of the appraisal instrument as the medium to accomplish career appraisal is opened for investigation. These questions are posed:

1. What has been the influence and result of the evolution in appraisal philosophy and practice upon present-day career appraisal?
2. What deficiencies are present in the appraisal system exercised today that seriously attenuate its effectiveness?
3. Will the present officer career management system be capable of capitalizing on career appraisal to develop the officer cadre needed in the future?

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



Obviously the significant ingredient to each of these related questions is career appraisal as well as being the focal point of the problem. The term "career appraisal" carries a variety of meanings, synonyms and euphemistic descriptions. Before proceeding further it would be prudent to impose a precise definition to avoid misinterpretation. The appraisal of individuals' performance is a fundamental human act. For purposes of this study, career implies one's advancement or achievement in a particular vocation, a lifework, profession or occupation.<sup>1</sup> Appraisal implies the estimating, judging, evaluating, or deciding the quality, worth, or value of an individual.<sup>2</sup> The professional worth of a Marine Officer, therefore, is a function of the aggregate qualities he possesses which make him of value to the Marine Corps, and the relative degree to which he possesses such qualities. What those qualities are and how they are appraised—estimated, judged, etc.—are the nebulous points upon which the system or philosophy of appraisal is based.

Long before the emergence of the great bureaucracies which dominate much of our lives today, each man watched other men, appraising their behavior in accordance with his interpretation of what he saw. Relationships were initiated, strengthened, or severed on the basis of personal appraisals of others.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George E. Brown, Jr., and Allan F. Larson, "Current Trends in Appraisal and Development," Personnel, January-February 1958, pp. 51-52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas L. Whisler and Shirley F. Harper (Eds.), Performance Appraisal: Research and Practice (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 1.





The appraisal, development and assignment of Marine Officers is, of course, a command (management) responsibility. Performance of this function in some form, either haphazardly or structured, has been necessary regarding promotion, assignment and career development. However, it has not always been accomplished with creditable information, systematic attention or equanimity. The evolutionary process, which will be examined in detail later, was aimed at formalizing the command responsibility relative to career appraisal so as to improve the reliability of the career management system.

The viability, or vitality as Mr. Kappel has termed it, of the Marine Corps is critically dependent on how perspicaciously the Corps can select and develop the officers necessary to assure viability. This cannot be accomplished by tenaciously clinging to old methods, ways, customs or fanciful cliches, regardless of how well steeped in tradition.<sup>1</sup> An effective organization will recognize where traditions serve important purposes, when they inspire, and when they cloud the image of leadership needed for tomorrow's Corps. Here, significantly, is one of the prime tests for future vitality—to know the difference between a tradition steeped in iconoclastic nonsense and one that permeates interpersonal relationships with organizational purpose.

This, then, should be our continuing concern as Marine Officers. We dare not turn our backs on methods and skills that have demonstrably paid off. We cannot afford to abjure the abilities we have practiced so long to acquire. But it should be realized—and this is the challenge—that no matter how successful we have been not all the methods we have learned will guarantee future success.

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<sup>1</sup>Kappel, p. 11.





### The Problem's Ramifications

The principle of quality is at the heart of tradition in the Marine Corps. The primary condition that allows this tradition to be maintained is the ability of individuals in the Corps to have traditional and instinctive feeling for quality in every aspect of their activities. In the Marine Corps one of the first obligations, then, must be a drive for quality. We must aim to do better than is commonly expected of us. This requires that each individual set high built-in standards and try constantly to raise the level of performance of each Marine Officer. But organizations—especially large formal organisms—pose additional complexities with which one must deal. The organization often has goals apart from those of the individuals who constitute the organization, and quite apart from any empirical aggrandizement of individual goals, feelings of quality, vitality, or high standards. Limited kinds of behavior, then, are expected of the individuals for limited periods of time. Although these expected behavior patterns vacillate somewhat, the individual's limited activities are expected in the aggregate to contribute to the achievement of the organizational goals.<sup>1</sup> However, invariably mechanistic organizational goals are impervious to dynamic individual behavioral goals, the results being a compromised reality, must be accepted.

Even if the individual and organizational goals matched perfectly, the most volatile element of the partnership would need some type control or measurement device. This usually boils down to people using some sort of structured device to appraise individual performance as it enhances or detracts from organizational goals, in an attempt to assure success of

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<sup>1</sup>Whisler and Harper, p. 2; and U. S. Department of the Navy, Organization Planning for Naval Units, pp. 1-2.



individual effort, its relationship to the organizational goals, and to measure variations in performance by systematic appraisal.<sup>1</sup> This is an effort (sometimes questionable) to help the individual improve or align his personal qualities; and to provide an internal audit of performance that measures not mechanistic organizational objectives or goal attainment but human qualities. Such a system of measuring dynamic human qualities by a structured, mechanistic, instrument erects a performance parameter for individuals that will assure attainment of organizational goals. If our practices were to wait until the aggrandizement of individual variation from performance parameters reflected need for correction, organizational goals might be compromised for personal reasons.

An appraisal system that can measure and then signal individual shortcomings so as to provide surveillance over dynamic and mechanistic factors is the reality that should manifest itself. The system should ask and at the same time try to answer the question: Are the officers of the Marine Corps growing in terms of interpersonal characteristics which bulk large in the attainment of organizational objectives?

The concern over appraising individuals cannot be entertained in a vacuum—all of these matters, the needs of the individual, the needs of the organization, and the difficulties of a judgmental system dependent on a highly personalized appraisal process, contribute to the problem of career appraisal in an organizational setting. The environment created solicits the probing inquiry of all.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



### Future Implications

The job of managing or commanding the Marine Corps is becoming more complex. In the future, the potential of a larger proportion of officers, those possessing qualities and personal vitality of command and with potentials to carry the challenging responsibilities, must be developed to the full. To do this might well entail a more systematic development and measurement of certain arts of command that are radically different from what has been true in the past.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. McNamara has strongly intimated that the officers we developed to fight World War II are not necessarily the epitome of modern organizational requirements. Possibly the criteria for appraising have been contributory faults:

For his top military advisor he wants planners and thinkers, not heroes. He wants team men not gladiators. He insists that the Joint Chiefs of Staff members be more than mere soldiers, sailors, or flyers.<sup>2</sup>

Says Mr. McNamara, in his somewhat pedantic way:

The application of power in a nuclear age takes a great deal of sophistication. It requires men with knowledge of and sensitivity to political-military consideration, not just military.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas L. Whisler, "Performance Appraisal and the Organization Man," Journal of Business, January 1958, pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup>"The Management Team," Time, February 5, 1965, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., quoting Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara.





To make these facts realities it might be prudent to modify the criteria for development of command judgment and leadership. Equally important, a common criterion must be adapted that spotlights, for appraisal, the traits that will best produce the career officer needed in the 70's and 80's, not a stereotyped emulation of the gallant and courageous conquerors of the rain forest of the Argonne or the frigid slopes of Korea.

For officers at all levels throughout the Corps, sharply defined appraisal goals will help to assure that appraisal decisions contribute to needed progress. Although general agreement exists that career appraisal is an effective tool to perpetuate leadership, many differences of opinion exist concerning the reliance that can be placed on the present career appraisal system to follow the swing of the pendulum and develop tomorrow's officer today. Analogous to consulting a road map, one must first know where he wants to go in order to decide what route to take. Douglas McGregor has been an outspoken leader in impugning the methodology employed by many organizations to reconcile the dynamic personal and mechanistic organizational requirements and develop vital leadership. His words cry out for understanding and application to existing appraisal systems:

Of course, managers cannot escape making judgments about subordinates. Without such evaluations, salary and promotion policies cannot be administered sensibly. But are subordinates, like products on an assembly line, to be accepted or rejected as a result of an inspection process? The inspection process may be made more accurate through research on the appraisal instrument, through training of the "inspectors," or through introducing group appraisal; the subordinate may be "reworked" by coaching or counseling before the final decision to accept or reject him; but as far as the assumptions of the conventional appraisal process are concerned, we still have what is practically identical with a program for product inspection.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>McGregor, p. 92.





Changing a few of McGregor's words, he might well have been discussing the Marine Corps' career appraisal system. The intention of this paper is to do just that—discuss the career appraisal system in a frame of reference which will illuminate gross deficiencies and point up areas of weakness which require strengthening to better meet present and future objectives. The setting of this inquiry is critical because these appraisal decisions largely determine both the immediate and the long-range performance of the command team.



## CHAPTER II

### THE EVOLUTION OF MARINE CORPS CAREER APPRAISAL

#### PRACTICES AND PHILOSOPHY

The assessment of human traits is not new, either to the world or to the Marine Corps. The use of rigidly structured devices to aid in the appraisal of personal traits is a recent development, however. The first career appraisal efforts within the Marine Corps, through the medium of a formally structured report, curiously, antedated promotion by selection—often credited with the "felt need" that brought about career appraisal—by a number of years.

The evolutionary process within the Marine Corps vacillated from a torpored fifty-year nap to an energized, pragmatic two-year shuffle which saw three separate appraisal formats utilized—not exactly a smooth transition. Nor did the evolving philosophy or format of career appraisal parallel any specific pattern of Marine Corps development or represent a concomitant development with any identifiable officer development achievement. The fact is the evolution of the fitness report as the primary instrument of career appraisal is sterilely unglamorous, and the philosophy that spawned its growth hopelessly muddled with plagiarism and misguided intervention.

#### Early Developments

The first Marine record intimating career appraisal and performance measurement aspirations was of 1799 vintage. Although probably not intended



as the Corps' maiden attempt at career appraisal, a letter report from Captain Daniel Cormack to Lieutenant Colonel Commandant Burrows accomplished just that purpose: "Lt. Amory is very ignorant of Military duty, as he acknowledges, but he is a smart Gentleman and far preferable to the others."<sup>1</sup>

Another early report, which saliently points to the early attention given the problem of appraising officers within the professional environment to which they must develop perviousness, is the first recorded efficiency report in the files of the Department of Defense (Figure 1, page 16), submitted by Lewis Cass from the Northwest Territory during the War of 1812.<sup>2</sup> This report presents a marked contrast to the forms currently in favor; still it accomplished the basic intent of today's appraisal system—ranking.

With the exception of these cited sporadic effusions, the philosophy of systematic career appraisal as a tool of personnel management lay dormant until the late 1800's.

U. S. Navy Regulation Number 3 of April 30, 1866, provided for the "report in full of the character and qualification of officers," and referred to the specific forms to be used. Forms 25, 26, and 27 were specified; these forms by 1891 had evolved into "Report of Fitness of Officers," forms A and B, and were used by the naval service until 1912, when a separate form was devised for the Marine Corps. Despite this early mention of officer evaluation techniques, the continuity of an appraisal system was lacking.

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<sup>1</sup>Colonel R. D. Heinl, Jr., "Fitness Reporting: Some Adverse Remarks . . .," Marine Corps Gazette, Vol. XXXXIII, No. 4 (April 1959), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Colonel Richard W. Fellows, "Merit Evaluation of United States Air Force Officers," (unpublished Master's thesis, Leland Stanford Junior University, 1948), p. 83 (citing War Department Files).





Sir:

I forward a list of the officers of the 27th Regt. of Inftry. arranged agreeably to rank. Annexed thereto you will find all the observations I deem necessary to make.

Respectfully,  
I am, Sir,  
Yo. Obt. Servt.  
/s/ Lewis Cass  
Brig. Gen.

# 27TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

Alex Denniston—Lieut. Col., Comdg.	-----	A Good natured man.
Clarkson Crolins—First Major	-----	A good man, but no officer.
Jesse D. Wadsworth—2nd Major	-----	An excellent officer.
Captain Christian Martel	}	All good officers.
Captain Aaron T. Crane		
Capt Benj. Wood		
Captain Maxwell		
Captain Shotwell	-----	A man of whom all unite in speaking ill. A knave despised by all.
Captain Allen Reynolds	-----	An officer of capacity, but imprudent and a man of most violent passions.
Captain Danl. Warren Porter	-----	Stranger but little known in the regiment.
First Lieut. Jas. Kerr	}	Merely good, nothing promising.
First Lieut. Thos. Darling		
First Lieut. Wm. Perrin	}	Low vulgar men, with exception of Perrin. Irish and from the meanest walks of life — Possessing nothing of the character of officers or gentlemen.
First Lieut. Danl. Scott		
First Lieut. Jas. I. Ryan		
First Lieut. Robt. McElwrath		
First Lieut. Robt. P. Ross	-----	Willing enough — has much to learn — with small capacity.
First Lieut. Hall	-----	Not joined the regiment.
2nd Lieut. Nicholas G. Carner	-----	A good officer but drinks hard and disgraces himself and the service.
2nd Lieut. Stewart Elder	-----	An ignorant unoffending Irishman.
2nd Lieut. McConkey	-----	Raised from the ranks, ignorant, vulgar, and incompetent.
2nd Lieut. Piercy	}	Come from the ranks, but all behave well and promise to make excell. officers.
2nd Lieut. Jacob J. Brown		
2nd Lieut. Thos. G. Spicer		
2nd Lieut. Oliver Vance		
2nd Lieut. James Garry	-----	A stranger in the regiment.
Third Lieut. Royal Geer	}	All Irish, promoted from the ranks, low vulgar men, without any one qualification to recommend them, more fit to carry the hod than the epaulettes.
Third Lieut. Meers		
Third Lieut. Clifford		
Third Lieut. Crawford		
Third Lieut. McKeon	}	Promoted from the ranks, behave well and will make good officers.
Third Lieut. John G. Scholotz		
Third Lieut. Francis T. Wheeler		
Third Lieut. Darrow	-----	Just joined the regiment — of fine appearance.
Ensign Behan	-----	The very dregs of the earth. Unfit for anything under heaven. God only knows how the poor thing got an appointment.
Ensign John Brown	}	Promoted from the ranks — men of no manner and no promise.
Ensign Bryan		
Ensign Charles West	-----	From the ranks. A good young man who does well.

Fig. 1.--Earliest appraisal report in Defense Department files.



On August 7, 1876, for instance, Secretary of the Navy, George M. Robeson, issued "Regulations for the Government of the Navy of the United States." The absence of a specific reference to officer appraisal or evaluation, other than a physical evaluation by a medical doctor, was conspicuous.<sup>1</sup> However, Chapter ten, Section one of that Regulation, titled "Rating and Disrating," specified that the Commanding Officer would appoint a board of three to:

inform themselves, as fully as possible of the previous naval history of the general service men on the ship and their general character, ability and fitness and make recommendation, signed by themselves and entered upon the log book of the ship, as to the ratings of the general service men.<sup>2</sup>

With these first faltering steps the seeds of evaluation, performance measurement and appraisal of officers seem to have been planted in the naval service, but fifteen years transpired before the first Marine report appeared.

The earliest mention of Marine Corps fitness reports appears in Navy Regulation Circular No. 86, September 10, 1891. At that time, and for the next two decades, the Marine Corps used the Navy's method of career appraisal and the Navy's form B as a format; they were governed by naval directives. Requirements were for adjectives to be used to describe the officer's professional ability, attention to duty, general conduct, sobriety, health, the efficiency of the men under his command, his performance of special duties, whether and to what extent his performance was

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<sup>1</sup>Regulations for the Government of the Navy of the United States, 1876, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 97.



beyond "ordinary routine," and his linguistic talents in any foreign language. The rating officer had a wide selection of adjectives from which to choose.<sup>1</sup>

A Marine Officer, for example, could be "excellent," "good," "tolerable," or "not good" in any of the above categories. Any "not good" was to be elaborated on at length in the section reserved for remarks.<sup>2</sup> Forms A and B then were adjective rating scales, but in 1909 the Navy changed to a numerical scale (see Table 1). This system gave the rating officer considerably more latitude in arriving at his appraisal of the officer's worth. A 2.5 was only tolerable, but a 2.1 was even less tolerable.

TABLE 1

NUMERICAL APPRAISAL SCALE<sup>a</sup>

Excellent	3.5	. . .	4.0
Very Good	3.0	. . .	3.5
Good	2.5	. . .	3.0
Tolerable	2.0	. . .	2.5
Poor	1.0	. . .	2.0
Bad	0	. . .	1.0

<sup>a</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Records and Research Section, Historical Branch, HQMC, Log Sheets, October 1959.

The special report forms adapted by the Marine Corps in 1909 were also on a numerical scale, but categories of performance were greatly expanded. Provisions for officers to record special schooling, special task, published papers, or proficiency in foreign languages were also included on the new report.

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<sup>1</sup>The term "rating officer" evolved into the term "reporting senior." Both refer to the individual who appraises the officer and completes the fitness report.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Records and Research Section, Historical Branch, HQMC, Log Sheets, October 1959.





Therefore, it is evident that these first reports were basically:

(1) numerical rating scales, or (2) a series of questions with fixed adjectival answers. The latter term will not be unfamiliar to officers in today's Marine Corps, the present instrument of career appraisal is completed by selecting scaled adjectival answers to specific questions posed by the report.

By 1912 the Marine Corps burgeoned forth with some ideas of their own on the type of form necessary to accomplish career appraisal, tailored to the needs of the Marine Corps. One of the last official acts of Major General George F. Elliott, tenth Commandant of the Marine Corps, was to approve the first fitness report specifically written for the Marine Corps, "Fitness Report of Officers of the Marine Corps - NMC 652."<sup>1</sup> This form parroted much of the Navy's form and basically would be classified as a numerical rating scale. The criteria for reporting and philosophy behind the form remained Navy, and Article 237 of "Navy Regulations" remained the unaltered bible. One of the oldest reports of this type on record was rendered on a subsequent Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant Colonel John Archer Lejeune, while serving at Marine Barracks, Navy Yard, New York (Figure 2, pages 20-21).<sup>2</sup>

#### The Early Numerical Scale Problems

The introduction of the numerical scale did not eliminate the problems of ranking individual officers and determining their position on the

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Records and Research Section, Historical Branch, HQMC. Biographical File on Major General George F. Elliott, USMC (Deceased).

<sup>2</sup>Idem. Biographical file on Major General John Archer Lejeune, USMC (Deceased).





# REPORT ON THE FITNESS OF OFFICERS

FORM B.

20

Name *J. A. Lyman* Rank *1st Lieut.*  
 U. S. A. Attached to *U. S. S. Washington, 2nd Det.*  
 nature of duty or position *USS Marine Guard.*  
 period covered by this report, from *October 1, 1891.*  
 to *November 1, 1892.*

1. Professional ability. *Good*
2. Attention to duty. *Very Good*
3. General conduct. *Good*
4. Sobriety. *Excellent*
5. Health. *Excellent*
6. Efficiency of men under his special control. *Very Good*
7. If any special duty has devolved upon him, state its nature, and how it was performed.  
*None*
8. If he has in any way gone beyond the requirements of ordinary routine, state the direction and the amount.  
*None*
9. Ability shown as a linguist or translator (state languages).  
*None*

10. Remarks *The men under the Officer are not particularly good but are not bad and reliable in appearance. The Officer is a good man, a soldier and a gentleman, he does not give the slightest indication of being what he is not. He is a very good officer in the field.*

I certify on honor that I believe the entire report made was true and impartial, and that I have communicated the foregoing as directed.

Supervising Statement

*E. B. Smith*

*Commander U. S. A.*



....., detachment, or recruiting party:

..... to maintain discipline, contentment, and interest in their duty among his

(b) Efficiency of personnel .....

(c) Efficiency of material .....

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

14. Bearing and conduct .....
- (a) Military appearance and manner .....
- (b) Manner of giving commands .....
- (c) Neatness of person and dress .....
- (d) Correctness and condition of uniform and manner of wearing it .....
15. During the period covered by this report, have his efficiency and reputation been impaired by the use of stimulants or drugs? .....
16. Is he negligent or careless as to financial obligations? .....
17. Was any punishment inflicted upon him during the period covered by this report? If so, give date and nature of offense and kind and degree of punishment .....

- B. Aptitude for the service: (a) In general .....
- (b) Liking for and interest in his profession .....
- (c) General temperament .....
- (d) Has he made good use of his opportunities for professional improvement? .....

(As calm or excitable, even tempered or irritable, forceful or weak, active

or listless, bold or overcautious, painstaking or careless, etc.)

### PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

9. Name any of the following duties in which he has shown more than ordinary ability, or in which he appears to be at his best. If more than one, state in what order he excels, and be particular as to each. Make special mention of any exceptional ability. No answer is necessary if not applicable or where no opportunity to judge.

Headquarters Marine Corps, administrative.

On staff duty other than at Headquarters:

As adjutant.

As quartermaster.

As paymaster.

As commissary.

Service schools, as instructor:

Naval War College.

Advanced Base School.

Marine Officers' School.

Garrison School.

Naval School.

Post office, etc.

As commander.

As captain.

As lieutenant.

As first lieutenant.

As second lieutenant.

As third lieutenant.

As fourth lieutenant.

As fifth lieutenant.

As sixth lieutenant.

As seventh lieutenant.

As eighth lieutenant.



rating scale. One eminently practical method of achieving a just score was proposed. Suppose you are a company commander and that rating time for your platoon leaders is upon you. Simply select your best officer and call him 4.0. Then choose your worst platoon leader and assign him a score somewhere between 0.0 and 4.0, according to his merits. Now that you have established a scale, you place the other officers according to their relationship to the best and worst.<sup>1</sup> The principal objection to this plan was the fact that in every company one officer was bound to be 4.0 or perfect.

Another suggestion advanced during the 1920's was less practical but certainly more intriguing. Instead of worrying about the officer's performance of duties, why not emphasize the importance of character, mental ability, and physique? Of the three, character was the most important, for no one lacking in honor had any business being an officer.

Reasoning behind this second proposal was solid enough. At the time, the Marine Corps program of officer training was pretty much in its infancy. A great many experienced officers had spent practically no time in the classroom. As a consequence, they might find themselves assigned some duty which they could not perform in an excellent manner; but this lack of aptitude would not lessen their overall value to the Corps. The same thing might also be true of a newly commissioned officer. A poor report, rendered because the individual did not have sufficient experience for his job, might blight an otherwise promising career.<sup>2</sup> Thus, character and

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<sup>1</sup>Board on Selection to Major General Commandant, Records of The Adjutant and Inspector's Department, 1965-45, "Efficiency, Efficiency Reports," Record Group 127, National Archives.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Records and Research Section, Historical Branch, HQMC, Log Sheets, October 1959.





ability to learn were qualities far more vital than the mere experience needed to perform routine duties in an excellent manner.

Yet the emphasis remained upon the performance of duty. What a man does is a reflection of his character and mental ability. Obviously few rating officers had the time or training to probe into the reasons that made their officers act as they did; they were, after all, Marines and not psychologists. "What would the individual officer rather be marked on," asked Brigadier General Rufus H. Lane, "his concrete performance of his specific duties, or upon a lot of abstract qualities, most of which have to be guessed at?"<sup>1</sup>

Following World War I, both the Army and the Navy returned to a system of rating by adjectives. The Marine Corps, most reluctant to abandon the numerical system, tried to come up with a workable scale that employed both a descriptive rating and a numerical grade. To this end, rating officers continued to present their best officer with a 4.0, to rate their worst subordinate, then to arrange the others between these two poles and translate the result into superior, above average, average, below average, and inferior. Yet, one flaw remained. Once the proper adjective had been selected, all officers within those categories were, for all practical purposes, equal.<sup>2</sup> A 3.6 in the rater's mind was just as superior as his 4.0.

Adoption of this method of rating by adjective brought with it the gloomy prophecy that 90 to 95 percent of the officers of the Corps would

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<sup>1</sup>Rufus H. Lane, "Discussions," Marine Corps Gazette, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Dec. 1925), 200-201.

<sup>2</sup>E. W. Sturdevant, "Fitness Reports," Marine Corps Gazette, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Sept. 1925), 89.



find their way into the "average" category.<sup>1</sup> Another commentator maintained that the following breakdown would result: superior, 5 per cent; above average 30 per cent; average, 70 per cent; and below average or inferior, 15 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

The experience of the War Department confirmed this latter prediction. As of 30 June 1925, 3,464 infantry officers were rated as follows: superior, 71 (2 per cent); above average, 1,006 (29 per cent); average, 2,289 (66 per cent); below average or unsatisfactory 98 (3 per cent); and inferior, none.<sup>3</sup>

#### World War I Influences

The 1913 addition of "Regulations for the Government of the Navy of the United States" broadened the scope of career appraisal, utilizing several articles to edify the naval service on the subject.<sup>4</sup>

These instructions provided that fitness of officers should be made on prescribed forms the last days of March and September, and upon detachment. Marine reports would be forwarded to the Major General Commandant. "Reports will contain a record of all punishment inflicted upon the officer, with data and nature of the offense and the kind and degree of punishment."<sup>5</sup> The new Articles also specified for the first time reporting

<sup>1</sup>Memorandum, Board of Selection to MGC, April 6, 1922, Records of the A & I's Department, 1965-45, RG 127, N.A.

<sup>2</sup>John Marston, "Discussions," Marine Corps Gazette, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Dec. 1925), 198.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>4</sup>U. S. Department of the Navy, Regulations for the Government of the Navy of the United States, 1913, Articles I 707 and I 708.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



seniors within the Navy and Marine Corps. The modification of a strict numerical scale was intimated by instructions for reporting seniors to place under "remarks" a brief expression of their opinion of the professional ability of the officer reported upon, this to be in addition to any other comment that they deemed pertinent and necessary to make the reports complete and adequate tools of career appraisal. The regulations had one very peculiar provision relative to what would be reported. That is, subparagraph 11 of Article I 707 provided:

. . . when a medical doctor detects indications of the use by any officer of intoxicants or drugs that tend to disqualify him physically, mentally or morally for service, he shall immediately submit a written statement to the effect. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This provision had the effect of introducing negative bias into the appraisal environment by weighing medical evaluations. Realizing these psychological impediments of appraisal the Marine Corps expediently looked the other way, the Navy became preoccupied and transfixed with the psychological aspects of career appraisal, and Doctor Walter Dill Scott devised and introduced into the Army a rating scale by which all officers of the Army were to be rated.<sup>2</sup> Doctor Scott's approach was intended to be,

a systematic application of an old principle long in use in the Army; its basis is the determination of the relative excellence of men by comparing them, in turn, with men whose ability is thoroughly known. . . .<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Department of the Army, The Personnel System of the United States Army, Vol. I: History of the Personnel System, developed by the Committee on Classification of Personnel in the Army, 1919, p. 559.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





This rating scale passed through several revisions before final approval and implementation within the Army in 1918. The War Department's General Order Number 85, issued in 1918, made the rating of officers by the Scott Rating Scale compulsory and set quarterly rating dates.<sup>1</sup> These categories were rated and are listed in what must have prevailed as order of importance: Physical Qualities, Leadership, Personal Qualities, Intelligence, and General Value to the Services.<sup>2</sup> In many ways the Army's appraisal system seemed to fulfill the requirements of the Marine Corps better than their own modification of the Navy's system. Serious attention was directed towards the results of Doctor Scott's work with the Army in the hope of improving the existing practices.

Prior to World War I the subjective climate under which career appraisal was fostered posed no great problems when it came time to interpret the reports into classifications of who got promoted and who did not. The Marine Corps was small enough for the personality of every rating officer to be indexed. A bad report by a notoriously low rater could be discounted and might even become an endorsement, while an excellent report from a "good old colonel" would be automatically downgraded by the promotion board. All of this changed with the expanding size of the Corps. The problem now lay in how to keep the rater's personality out of his report. Less important than the subjects upon which he was marked was the basis of comparison used to obtain an officer's rating.

Revolutionary new steps taken by the Army did not have a pronounced effect on the Navy. However, in 1920 Regulations for the Government of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 569.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 571.





Navy of the United States contained a new Article, Number 137, devoted to the area of career appraisal through fitness reports. Methodology underwent minor surgery during this period, with a new requirement for reports, "whenever officers are ordered to appear for examination or reexamination . . . ."<sup>1</sup> Additionally, reports on Second Lieutenants were required four times a year, instead of twice, in order to evaluate quickly their performance in the new military environment.

The basic "Navy Regulations" had remained the guiding and only criteria for career appraisal within the Marine Corps for over forty-five years, undergoing only minor modification during this time. By 1927 the report of fitness was required only once a year, instead of semiannually as before. The special report by a medical doctor, mentioned above, was enlightenly negated. Few other salient changes were accomplished during these years, and an imperviousness to research being undertaken in industry during this period was clearly indicated.

During the mid-1920's the Marine Corps, under the influence of Doctor Scott's work with the Army career evaluation program, adopted with only minor adaptations the Army's efficiency report.<sup>2</sup> Even though the guidelines implementing the Marine Corps program of career appraisal remained antiquated "Navy Regulations," the treatment itself acquired a new look, influenced by a somewhat less stilted philosophy.

On June 3, 1940 the Marine Corps Manual was issued under the signature of Major General Thomas Holcomb and approved by the Acting Secretary of

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Department of the Navy, Regulations for the Government of the Navy of the United States, 1920, Article 137.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Howard F. Uphoff, Technical Assistant and Project Coordinator, Personnel Analysis Branch, HQMC, December 28, 1964.



the Navy, Louis Comptom. This new manual was the first documented record of the Marine Corps' issuing separate instruction on officer career appraisal, although heavy reliance was still placed on "Navy Regulations," Article 137, for edification of the commander on the completion of the form and the criteria for reporting.

#### Escalating Problems of the '40's

The war years of 1940-1945 and the sudden escalation in personnel, problems, and complexities, embued a new interest in appraisal methodology. This new interest was generated by the officers being appraised and by those attempting to use the fitness report as a medium to perpetuate leadership.

On February 9, 1945, in an attempt to consolidate and evaluate the proliferation of letter-type instruction dealing with individual career appraisal problems, and the mechanics of completing fitness reports, the Commandant, General A. A. Vandergrift, issued an amplifying instruction in the form of "Circular Letter 636."<sup>1</sup> The real intent of this instruction was not to effect modification of an acknowledged faltering appraisal system but rather to stamp out the increased personal correspondence (12,000 letters per day) engendered by serious insecurity and doubt entertained by the officers being victimized. At a time when a jaundiced eye should have been directed at a perfunctory, badly skewed practice, administrators instead were infatuated with expediencies—"with a view to reducing this correspondence and having officers' official records completed more expeditiously. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Letter of Instruction Number 1209: Circular Letter No. 636. From the Commandant of the Marine Corps to all officers, 1946, p. 1103.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1161.



Obsessed with colloquial problems, administrative details, the mechanics of completing the form and personal bickering, a vacuum of indifference seemed to develop relative to the purpose, intent and objectives of career appraisal. On rare occasions, when the objectives of the system were exhorted, it was in fatuous, impersonal, trite phraseology always failing to relate the objectives to the means being used to reach those goals.

The fitness report form is used by the Commandant as a basis for assignment to duty, by selection boards in the selection of officers for promotion. . . . The value and importance of fitness reports cannot be overemphasized. . . . They must appreciate the necessity of reporting with perfect candor on the qualities, capabilities, and performance of duty of officers under their command. Consistency should be maintained throughout the report.<sup>1</sup>

On June 16, 1949 Marine Corps General Order 32, titled "Instructions for the Submission of Fitness Reports on Officers of the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve," cancelled "Circular Letter 636" and Articles 1-11, 10-22, and 13-4 of the Marine Corps Manual.<sup>2</sup> The pragmatic and officious intent of this directive far outweighed any expostulation of a logical or philosophical purpose, implicit or explicit, in the semiannual report. The language of a forty-year old "Navy Regulation" was apparent and the order was conspicuous in its failure to impart other than administrative details. The instrument of reporting for this system of career appraisal remained the adapted Army efficiency report, vintage mid-1920's (Figure 3, pages 30-31).

About this time there was dissatisfaction with the old, Army-type form, and a research project was launched by the Personnel Department to discover a more discriminating and effective type of fitness report tailored

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 1164.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, General Order 32, "Instructions for the Submission of Fitness Reports," 1949, p. 1.







REPORT ON FITNESS OF OFFICERS OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

(To be submitted in accordance with Art. 137, U. S. Navy Regulations, 1920, and Art. 10-22, Marine Corps Manual)

..... U. S. M. C.  
(Name—Surname first) (Rank)

Ship or station .....

Period covered ..... months, from ..... to .....

To be answered by officer reported on:

1. Regular duties .....

2. Additional duties .....

3. Wife's address .....

4. Name, relationship, and address of person other than wife to be notified in case of emergency .....

..... U. S. M. C.  
(Signature) (Rank)

To be answered by reporting officer:

5. Reporting officer ..... U. S. ....  
(Name) (Rank)

6. Method of rating.—When rating this officer, consider carefully and keep in mind the following definitions, taking into consideration his length of service, the opportunities afforded him which might have a bearing on his performance of duty, his personal characteristics, and professional qualifications:

- UNSATISFACTORY.—Inefficient; below minimum standard.
- FAIR.—Satisfactory; passably efficient; up to minimum standard.
- GOOD.—Average qualifications; efficient, but to a less degree than "Very good."
- VERY GOOD.—Above average; efficient; well qualified.
- EXCELLENT.—Highly efficient; qualified to a high degree.
- OUTSTANDING.—Superior; exceptionally efficient; qualified to a preeminent degree.
- NOT OBSERVED.—To be used in all cases where the reporting officer has had insufficient opportunity to observe the officer reported on during the period covered by this report to permit a rating as to performance of a particular duty, personal characteristics, or professional qualifications.

7. Before making out this report, decide in your own mind on an actual officer in the grade of the officer now being reported on who, in your opinion, based on personal knowledge, is the outstanding officer of his rank in the Marine Corps; or  
Decide in your own mind the character attributes and professional qualifications which the ideal officer in the grade of the officer now being reported on should possess.

	Not observed	Unsatisfactory	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Outstanding
8. Considering the officer reported on in comparison with your ideal (7), and having in mind the instructions under (6) "Method of Rating", indicate your estimate of him by marking "X" in the appropriate space below.							
Performance of duty (based on fact):							
(a) Regular duties .....							
(b) Additional duties .....							
(c) Administrative duties .....							
(d) Executive duties .....							
(e) Handling officers .....							
(f) Handling enlisted men .....							
(g) Training troops .....							
(h) Tactical handling of troops (unit appropriate to officer's grade) .....							

Fig. 3.--Appraisal instrument used during the 1930's & 1940's



9. To what degree has he exhibited the following qualifications? Consider him in comparison with your ideal (7), and indicate your estimate by marking "X" in the appropriate space below.	Not observed	Unsatisfactory	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Outstanding
(a) Physical fitness (physical stamina; endurance under hardship, adversity, or discouragement)							
(b) Military bearing and neatness (dignity of demeanor; neat and smart appearance)							
(c) Attention to duty (industry; the trait of working thoroughly and conscientiously)							
(d) Cooperation (the faculty of working in harmony with others, military or civilian)							
(e) Initiative (the trait of taking necessary or appropriate action on own responsibility)							
(f) Intelligence (the ability to grasp readily situations and instructions)							
(g) Judgment and common sense (the ability to think clearly and arrive at logical conclusions)							
(h) Presence of mind (the ability to think and act promptly and effectively in an unexpected emergency or under great strain)							
(i) Force (the faculty of carrying out with energy and resolution that which is believed to be reasonable, right, or duty)							
(j) Leadership (the capacity to direct, control, and influence others and still maintain high morale)							
(k) Loyalty (the quality of rendering faithful and willing service, and unswerving allegiance under any and all circumstances)							

10. Has he any characteristics—temperament, moral, physical, etc.—which adversely affect his efficiency? .....  
If yes, briefly describe them.....

11. During the period covered by this report, has the work of this officer been reported on either in a commendatory way, or adversely? If so, indicate subject matter and date.....

12. During the period covered by this report was he the subject of any disciplinary action that should be included on his record? ..... If yes, and if not previously reported to Headquarters, attach separate statement of nature and attendant circumstances.

13. In case any unfavorable entries have been made by you on this or on a previous report, were the deficiencies noted brought to the attention of the officer concerned? ..... If yes, what improvement, if any, has been noted? .....  
If no improvement was noted, what period of time has elapsed since the deficiencies were brought to his notice? .....

14. Considering the possible requirements of the service in war, indicate your attitude toward having this officer under your command. Would you—  
(a) Particularly desire to have him?..... (c) Be willing to have him?.....  
(b) Be glad to have him?..... (d) Prefer not to have him?.....  
If (d), explain briefly .....

15. (To be answered only when reporting on officers serving under revocable commissions). Do you recommend retention in the service after expiration of revocable period of commission?.....  
(Yes or no; if negative give reasons)

16. REMARKS: (To be used for additional pertinent information or comment, if any, not covered elsewhere in this report) .....

17. Indicate your estimate of this officer's "General Value to the Service", using the ratings specified in (6) .....

18. Having in mind the special fitness of this officer and the efficiency of the naval service, I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief all entries made hereon are true and without prejudice or partiality.

(Signature)

(Rank)

U. S. ....

(Date)

(Duty)





to the needs of the Marine Corps.<sup>1</sup> It was indicated that habits and customs had developed among Marine Officers, regarding ratings, which were continuously reducing the discriminating effectiveness of the Marine Corps career appraisal system.

After extensive analysis and review, over a period from October 1948 to July 1950, using seven different pilot model forms, a completely new and different philosophy and a new reporting instrument were adopted in 1950 (Figure 4, pages 33 - 36). The new form was based on the Air Force's critical incident report and was a radical departure from the forty-year-old adjectival rating scale procedures.

The new form had great potentialities which allowed deviation from the subjective straight jacket of the rating scale. The new form provided for objective appraisal of an officer's strength and weakness as they were manifest at critical incident points in his performance of duty.<sup>2</sup>

On July 13, 1950 Marine Corps General Order 72 and a special instructional bulletin were issued cancelling General Order 32 and implementing the new philosophy on what should be weighted in the appraisal of an officer's career. The fitness report form was radically revised and form 652 PD (Rev. 7-50) and form 652a PD were issued to all commands. The semi-annual fitness reports previously required were scrapped and the new report required annually. The importance of the new form was saliently pointed up, if by nothing else by the increased wordage in the new implementing order—fifteen pages as opposed to seven pages for the superseded order.

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<sup>1</sup>Uphoff, interview, November 24, 1964.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



# OFFICER FITNESS REPORT

## U. S. MARINE CORPS

PERMANENT SAMPLE  
FUNCTIONAL FILE

NO. E-16  
DATE 8-29-50  
DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES 33

### SECTION A (To be completed by adjutant or unit personnel officer)

(Last name) \_\_\_\_\_ (First name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ (Grade) \_\_\_\_\_ USMC \_\_\_\_\_ (Service number) \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Primary MOS \_\_\_\_\_ Additional MOS's \_\_\_\_\_

Occasion for report (check appropriate box):  
☐ Annual ☐ Detachment of officer reported on ☐ Change of reporting senior ☐ Concurrent report ☐ Special (Explain on line below)

Period covered: From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Months \_\_\_\_\_

Periods of nonavailability (30 days or more) (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Duty assignments during period covered: Regular (Dates, descriptive title, and duty MOS) \_\_\_\_\_

Additional (Descriptive title and number of months) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Officer's preference for next assignment (1st choice) \_\_\_\_\_ (2d choice) \_\_\_\_\_ (3d choice) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Name of reporting senior \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ US \_\_\_\_\_

10. Duty assignment \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION B (To be completed by reporting senior)

11. Recommendations for officer's next duty assignment:

12. During the period covered by this report:

	Yes	No	
(a) Has the work of this officer been reported on in a commendatory way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If Yes in (a), (b), or (c), and a report has NOT been submitted to the CMC, attach separate statement of nature and attendant circumstances. If a report has been submitted to the CMC, reference such report below:
(b) Has the work of this officer been reported adversely?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(c) Was he the subject of any disciplinary action that should be included on his record?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

13. Entries on this report are based on (Check appropriate box):  
☐ Daily contact and close observation of his work ☐ Frequent observations of his work ☐ Infrequent observations of his work

14. Remarks:

Fig. 4.--Critical incident report implemented by General Order 72 and cancelled by General Order 105.





## SECTION C (To be completed by reporting senior)

## DIRECTIONS

1. This section contains 27 elements on which the officer is to be rated. For each element five levels of performance are defined by examples. The examples do not cover every possible type of behavior for the element to be rated, but are *typical* examples of performance at the various levels.
2. Read and consider all five levels of performance which are defined for each element. Determine which level most properly describes the officer, and record an "X" in the box above the selected example. Mark the "unknown" box whenever you have insufficient information to make an evaluation.
3. Follow this procedure until you have recorded a mark for each of the 27 elements.

## I. PROFICIENCY IN HANDLING ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

## 1. UNDERSTANDING INSTRUCTIONS:

- |                          |                              |                                |   |   |  |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/>       | <input type="checkbox"/>                                | <input type="checkbox"/>                        | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| Unknown                  | Misunderstands instructions. | Is slow to grasp instructions. | Understands instructions with a minimum of elaboration. | Grasps quickly the main points of instructions. | Grasps instructions quickly, completely, and accurately. |

## 2. SCHEDULING WORK:

- |                          |  |   |  |  |   |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>                          | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| Unknown                  | Schedules work so poorly that the activities of others are hindered. | Makes ineffective allocations of time and effort. | Schedules work so as to cover the important phases of assignments. | Schedules work so well that all phases of assignments are covered. | Distributes time and effort so that all phases of assignments are covered in a particularly efficient manner. |

## 3. CHECKING ACCURACY OF WORK:

- |                          |                                    |  |                              |                                    |                          |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>           | <input type="checkbox"/>               | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/>           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unknown                  | Overlooks numerous serious errors. | Overlooks serious errors occasionally. | Overlooks only minor errors. | Overlooks only a few minor errors. | Overlooks no errors.     |

## 4. WRITING LETTERS AND REPORTS:

- |                          |  |   |                                       |   |   |
|--------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/>                                      | <input type="checkbox"/>                                  |
| Unknown                  | Frequently writes unacceptable letters or reports. | Writes acceptable letters or reports only after receiving suggestions for extensive revision. | Writes acceptable letters or reports. | Writes letters or reports which are clear and well expressed. | Writes superior letters or reports on difficult subjects. |

## 5. GETTING COOPERATION:

- |                          |   |  |   |  |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>                              | <input type="checkbox"/>                 | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Unknown                  | Antagonizes many of those whose support is essential. | Makes little attempt to get cooperation. | Enlists cooperation in important phases of his work from those concerned. | Enlists cooperation in all phases of his work by dealing tactfully with those concerned. | Gets the full and active support of all concerned through his tactful and persuasive manner. |

## 6. PRESENTING FINISHED WORK:

- |                          |   |   |  |  |  |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>                             | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Unknown                  | Presents work in such disorganized form that it gives almost no basis for action. | Presents work in such form that it gives incomplete basis for action. | Presents work in such form that action can be taken. | Presents work in such form that necessary action is clearly indicated. | Presents work so organized that action can be taken quickly and with confidence. |

## II. PROFICIENCY IN SUPERVISING PERSONNEL

## 7. DELEGATING AUTHORITY:

- |                          |   |   |  |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>                  | <input type="checkbox"/>                            | <input type="checkbox"/>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>                                | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| Unknown                  | Hesitates to delegate necessary authority | Makes overlapping or vague delegation of authority. | Delegates authority to obtain adequate efficiency. | Delegates authority so well that efficiency is assured. | Makes clear-cut delegations of authority resulting in maximum efficiency. |

## 8. GIVING ORDERS AND INSTRUCTIONS:

- |                          |  |  |  |   |  |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Unknown                  | Creates resentment by the arbitrary manner in which he gives orders. | Obtains submission to orders by his reliance on authority alone. | Obtains compliance without arousing resentment when giving orders. | Achieves willing compliance by considering the self-respect of subordinates when giving orders. | Inspires enthusiastic cooperation by the use of tact in giving orders. |

## 9. SUPPORTING ACTIONS OF SUBORDINATES:

- |                          |  |   |  |   |   |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| Unknown                  | Disclaims responsibility for subordinates' actions taken under the authority he has delegated to them. | Does not support actions taken under authority that he has delegated to subordinates. | Backs up actions taken under specific authority delegated to subordinates. | Backs up actions taken under general authority delegated to subordinates. | Takes responsibility for subordinates' actions even when subordinates exceed authority delegated to them. |

## 10. DEVELOPING TEAMWORK:

- |                          |  |   |  |  |   |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| Unknown                  | Neglects to develop cooperation and teamwork among his subordinates. | Makes little effort to develop cooperation and teamwork among his subordinates. | Develops adequate cooperation and teamwork among his subordinates. | Develops good teamwork which results in an effective organization. | Develops outstanding teamwork which results in maximum effectiveness. |



**11. MAINTAINING RELATIONS WITH SUBORDINATES:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Fails to maintain discipline and the respect due an officer in his position because of undue familiarity with subordinates.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintains discipline and the respect due an officer in his position with difficulty because of undue familiarity with subordinates.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintains friendly relations with subordinates without loss of discipline or the respect due his position.	<input type="checkbox"/> Associates with subordinates in a manner which insures the respect due him as a superior officer.	<input type="checkbox"/> Attains a high level of discipline and respect from subordinates through his friendly but dignified conduct toward them.
-------------------------------------	---	---	--	---	--

**III. PROFICIENCY IN PLANNING AND DIRECTING ACTION****12. SOLVING PROBLEMS:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Fails to solve problems commonly encountered in his work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes inadequate solutions to problems he could reasonably be expected to handle successfully.	<input type="checkbox"/> Solves day-to-day problems by making use of existing resources.	<input type="checkbox"/> Solves difficult problems by making adaptations of existing resources.	<input type="checkbox"/> Solves very unusual problems by ingenious procedures.
-------------------------------------	---	--	---	--	---

**13. PREPARING PLANS:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepares inadequate plans.	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepares plans based on only obvious factors.	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepares adequate plans emphasizing the obvious factors.	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepares thorough plans based on an understanding of all factors.	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepares highly effective plans based on a thorough analysis of all factors.
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	---	--

**14. TAKING PROMPT ACTION:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Fails to act when decisions are needed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Hesitates or puts off making needed decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually takes necessary action with a minimum of delay.	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently takes prompt action to meet established needs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Takes prompt action in unusual or complicated situations.
-------------------------------------	---	--	---	---	---

**15. MAKING CORRECT DECISIONS:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Frequently makes unsound or questionable decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally makes questionable decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually makes adequate decisions based on reasonable interpretation of facts.	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually makes good decisions showing sound evaluations of all the factors involved.	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes excellent decisions which exactly fit all the factors involved.
-------------------------------------	---	--	---	---	---

**16. MAKING FORCEFUL EFFORTS:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Shows no vigor and force in his efforts to achieve objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Exhibits little vigor and force in his efforts to achieve objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually vigorous and forceful in his efforts to achieve objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Pursues objectives of the organization with vigor and force.	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes extremely vigorous and forceful efforts to achieve objectives.
-------------------------------------	--	---	---	--	--

**17. ABSORBING MATERIALS:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Delays operations because of slowness in absorbing facts.	<input type="checkbox"/> Achieves inadequate results because of slow learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Learns rapidly enough to do his job in an acceptable manner.	<input type="checkbox"/> Achieves good results because of capacity to learn involved materials rapidly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Achieves exceptional results because of his unusual ability to learn.
-------------------------------------	---	---	--	--	---

**IV. ACCEPTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY****18. CARRYING OUT ORDERS AND DIRECTIVES:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Frequently delays compliance with orders and directives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes delays compliance with orders and directives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Carries out orders and directives without undue delay.	<input type="checkbox"/> Carries out orders and directives promptly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Carries out promptly and effectively the spirit and intent of orders and directives.
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	---	--

**19. COOPERATING WITH ASSOCIATES:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooperates grudgingly with associates.	<input type="checkbox"/> Gives assistance to associates when requested to do so.	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooperates willingly with associates when called upon.	<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntarily assists associates when help is required.	<input type="checkbox"/> Is alert to offer assistance to associates when help is needed.
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	---	---

**20. ATTENDING TO DUTY:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Requires constant supervision to keep his attention on his assigned duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Works just hard enough to get by.	<input type="checkbox"/> Shows acceptable industry in his work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Works hard and willingly to achieve objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Does extra work voluntarily in order to achieve objectives.
-------------------------------------	---	---	--	---	---

**21. MAINTAINING MILITARY APPEARANCE:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Appearance and bearing interfere with his effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/> Appearance and bearing detract somewhat from his effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/> Presents a good appearance and bearing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Appearance and bearing create a distinctly favorable impression.	<input type="checkbox"/> Appearance and bearing inspire a high degree of confidence.
-------------------------------------	--	---	---	--	---

**22. CONFORMING TO STANDARDS OF PERSONAL CONDUCT:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduces his efficiency or discredits the service by nonconformance to accepted standards of personal conduct.	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not attain his full efficiency because of occasional laxity in his personal conduct.	<input type="checkbox"/> Follows acceptable standards in his personal conduct.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintains high standards in his personal conduct.	<input type="checkbox"/> Is a distinct credit to the service by maintaining exceptionally high standards of personal conduct.
-------------------------------------	---	---	---	---	--

**23. HANDLING PUBLIC RELATIONS:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Handles public relations in such a manner as to create antagonism.	<input type="checkbox"/> Overlooks opportunities to further good public relations.	<input type="checkbox"/> In handling public relations usually creates a favorable impression.	<input type="checkbox"/> Is alert to opportunities to further good public relations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Creates opportunities to advance best interests of the service.
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	---	---

**Fig. 4.--Continued**





## V. PROFICIENCY IN DUTY ASSIGNMENTS

## 24. APPLYING TRAINING AND INFORMATION:

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes serious mistakes in applying fundamentals of his training.	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes acceptable application of his training and information only to routine problems.	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes acceptable application of his training and information to most problems.	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes skilled application of his training and information to most problems.	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates an unusually high degree of skill in applying his training and information to all problems.
----------------------------------	---	---	---	--	---

## 25. IMPROVING EFFECTIVENESS:

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Overlooks opportunities offered him to improve his effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes limited effort to improve his effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/> Accepts opportunities to improve his effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/> Is alert to opportunities to improve his effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/> Actively seeks out opportunities to improve his effectiveness.
----------------------------------	--	---	--	--	---

## 26. PROFICIENCY IN REGULAR DUTIES:

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Performs inadequately in many phases of his regular duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Performs adequately in routine phases of his regular duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Performs adequately in dealing with all problems encountered in his regular duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Performs excellently in all phases of his regular duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Does exceptional work even in the most difficult phases of his regular duties.
----------------------------------	--	---	--	--	---

## 27. PROFICIENCY IN ADDITIONAL DUTIES:

<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Performs inadequately in many phases of his additional duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Performs adequately in routine phases of his additional duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Performs adequately in dealing with all problems encountered in his additional duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Performs excellently in all phases of his additional duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Does exceptional work even in the most difficult phases of his additional duties.
----------------------------------	---	--	---	---	--

## SECTION D (To be used by reporting senior, when appropriate)

Record here any comments necessary to clarify specific ratings made in Section C

## SECTION E (To be completed by reporting senior)

I CERTIFY that to the best of my knowledge and belief all entries made hereon are true and without prejudice or partiality.

(Signature of reporting senior)

(Date)

## SECTION F (To be completed by officer reported on)

I have seen this completed report:

(Check one) ☐ I have no statement to make.  
☐ I have attached a statement.

(Signature of officer reported on)

(Date)

## SECTION G (To be completed by reviewing officer)

Name of reviewing officer..... Grade..... USMC.....

Duty assignment..... Initials.....





The new system was riddled with problems from its inception. Reporting seniors balked, the new form was so different the promotion boards were unable to make heads or tails of it:

The format of the new officers' fitness report contains only the observations of the reporting senior and does not include the evaluation and translation of these observations into performance scores or adjective terminology.<sup>1</sup>

So, in 1952, back the Corps marched to a somewhat streamlined version of the old reliable of the 1920's, which is still with us (Figure 5, pages 38 - 39).<sup>2</sup>

This short and gasping try at viability with the critical incident concept was cut down February 20, 1952. General Order 105 terminated the two-year experiment and returned to a modified rating scale and free written essay form, with all associated ramifications.<sup>3</sup> However, what seemed to be one giant step backwards in fact was not as bad as it appeared in reality. The fitness report form accompanying the implementing instructions was a revised instrument. During the ensuing years the form underwent additional modifications aimed at improving the validity of the form to provide an adequate method of career appraisal.

### The Sceptre of Skewness

During this evolutionary period one pronounced sceptre hung over the system as exercised through the medium of the rating scale—skewness.

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Project D-2: Revision of Officers Fitness Reports, Personnel Analysis and Review Branch, November 1950.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, General Order 105, Officer Fitness Reports, 1952, p. 1.



## OFFICER FITNESS REPORT—U.S. MARINE CORPS

MAYMC 10147-PD (REV. 6-63)

(SUPERSEDES 2-57 AND 4-61 EDITIONS WHICH WILL BE USED)

38

## SECTION A

EMBOSSSED PLATE IMPRESSION (Name, Grade, Service No., MOS's)

EMBOSSSED PLATE IMPRESSION (Organization)

\*1. NAME (Last) (First) (Middle initial) GRADE USMC SERVICE NO.

\*2. ORGANIZATION

\*3. PRIMARY MOS

ADDITIONAL MOS's

4. OCCASION FOR THIS REPORT (Check appropriate box)

☐ SEMIANNUAL ☐ DETACHMENT OF OFFICER REPORTED ON (Enter unit or station to which detached, below) ☐ CHANGE OF REPORTING SENIOR ☐ CONCURRENT REPORT ☐ OTHER (Explain below)

5. PERIOD COVERED: FROM (Day, month, year) TO (Day, month, year) MONTHS

6. PERIODS OF NONAVAILABILITY (30 DAYS OR MORE) (Explain)

7. DUTY ASSIGNMENTS DURING PERIOD COVERED: A. REGULAR (Dates, descriptive title, and duty MOS)

8. ADDITIONAL (Descriptive title and number of months)

MARKSMANSHIP QUALIFICATIONS  
(Lieutenants and Captains)

8. WIFE'S ADDRESS

9. AGE, RELATIONSHIP OF DEPENDENTS REQUIRING TRANSPORTATION

10. OFFICER'S PREFERENCE FOR NEXT ASSIGNMENT (1st choice)

(2nd choice)

(3d choice)

SIGNATURE OF OFFICER REPORTED ON

DATE

## SECTION B (To be completed by reporting senior)

11. NAME AND GRADE OF REPORTING SENIOR

US

12. DUTY ASSIGNMENT

13. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICER'S NEXT DUTY ASSIGNMENT

14. DURING THE PERIOD COVERED BY THIS REPORT—

YES NO

(a) Has the work of this officer been reported on in a commendatory way? ☐ ☐(b) Has the work of this officer been reported adversely? ☐ ☐(c) Was this officer the subject of any disciplinary action that should be included on his record? ☐ ☐

If YES in (a), (b), or (c), and a report has NOT been submitted to the CMC, attach separate statement of nature and attendant circumstances. If a report has been submitted to the CMC, reference such report below:

15. A. ENTRIES ON THIS REPORT ARE BASED ON (Check appropriate box)

☐ DAILY CONTACT AND CLOSE OBSERVATION OF THIS OFFICER'S WORK ☐ FREQUENT OBSERVATIONS OF THIS OFFICER'S WORK ☐ INFREQUENT OBSERVATIONS OF THIS OFFICER'S WORK

15. B. TO BE COMPLETED ON ORGANIZED RESERVE OFFICERS

ATTENDED OF SCHEDULED DRILLS

Fig. 5.--Career appraisal instrument currently used by the Marine Corps.





**SECTION C** (To be completed in pen and ink by reporting senior)

Considering the officer reported on in comparison with all other officers of the same grade whose professional abilities are known to you personally, indicate your estimate of this officer by marking "X" in the appropriate spaces below.

**16. PERFORMANCE OF DUTY** (Based on fact)

	NOT OBSERVED	UNSATISFACTORY	BELOW AVERAGE	AVERAGE	ABOVE AVERAGE	EXCELLENT	OUTSTANDING
(a) REGULAR DUTIES							
(b) ADDITIONAL DUTIES							
(c) ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES							
(d) HANDLING OFFICERS							
(e) HANDLING ENLISTED PERSONNEL							
(f) TRAINING PERSONNEL							
(g) TACTICAL HANDLING OF TROOPS (Unit appropriate to officer's grade)							

**17. TO WHAT DEGREE HAS HE EXHIBITED THE FOLLOWING?**

(n) ENDURANCE (Physical and mental ability for carrying on under fatiguing conditions)							
(b) PERSONAL APPEARANCE (The trim of habitually appearing neat, smart, and well-groomed in uniform or civilian attire)							
(c) MILITARY PRESENCE (The quality of maintaining appropriate dignity and soldierly bearing)							
(d) ATTENTION TO DUTY (Industry; the trait of working thoroughly and conscientiously)							
(e) COOPERATION (The faculty of working in harmony with others, military and civilian)							
(f) INITIATIVE (The trait of taking necessary or appropriate action on own responsibility)							
(g) JUDGMENT (The ability to think clearly and arrive at logical conclusions)							
(h) PRESENCE OF MIND (The ability to think and act promptly and effectively in an unexpected emergency or under great strain)							
(i) FORCE (The faculty of carrying out with energy and resolution that which is believed to be reasonable, right or duty)							
(j) LEADERSHIP (The capacity to direct, control, and influence others and still maintain high morale)							
(k) LOYALTY (The quality of rendering faithful and willing service, and unsuering allegiance under any and all circumstances)							
(l) PERSONAL RELATIONS (Faculty for establishing and maintaining cordial relations with military and civilian associates)							
(m) ECONOMY IN MANAGEMENT (Effective utilization of men, money and materials)							

**18. Considering the possible requirements of service in war, indicate your attitude toward having this officer under your command.**

Would you— ☐ NOT OBSERVED ☐ PREFER NOT TO HAVE? ☐ BE WILLING TO HAVE? ☐ BE GLAD TO HAVE? ☐ PARTICULARLY DESIRE TO HAVE?

**19. (a) Indicate your estimate of this officer's "General Value to the Service" by marking "X" in the appropriate box:**

NOT OBSERVED	UNSATISFACTORY	BELOW AVERAGE	AVERAGE	ABOVE AVERAGE	EXCELLENT	OUTSTANDING
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**(b) Show distribution of all Item 19. (a) markings awarded officers of his grade for this reporting occasion:**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**SECTION D** (To be completed by reporting senior in pen and ink.) Record in this space a concise appraisal of the professional character of the officer reported on. (This space must not be left blank.)

**SECTION E** (To be completed by the reporting senior)

I CERTIFY that to the best of my knowledge and belief all entries made hereon are true and without prejudice or partiality.

(Signature of reporting senior)

(Date)

**SECTION F** (To be completed when required)

(Check One)

I have seen this completed report.

☐ I HAVE NO STATEMENT TO MAKE

☐ I HAVE ATTACHED A STATEMENT

(Signature of officer reported on)

(Date)

**SECTION G** (To be completed by reviewing officer)

NAME OF REVIEWING OFFICER \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE \_\_\_\_\_ US \_\_\_\_\_

DUTY ASSIGNMENT \_\_\_\_\_ INITIALS \_\_\_\_\_





Fitness reports were becoming increasingly less useful as comparative devices.

For example, a 1959 sample of scaling indicated that 98 percent of all colonels were rated "excellent" or above in "General Value to the Service," and ninety-two percent of all second lieutenants are above average or higher—a statistical nonesuch.<sup>1</sup>

A direct correlation between rank of the officer reported on and the degree of excellence attained seems to be the major contribution of the career appraisal system. Table 2, page 41, which depicts a 1956 sample of several thousand reports, shows the percentage of officers, by rank, who were rated as "Outstanding" in their general value to the service and regular duties.<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of fact, the adjective method had become by 1959 less than satisfactory. Proof of this is a survey conducted by the Administrative and Records Unit, Officer Detail Section, Assignment and Classification Branch of the Personnel Department. To assay the accuracy of the form (Figure 5, pages 38 - 39), all fitness reports submitted on officers of the 2d Marine Division and 2d Marine Aircraft Wing between September 1958 and April 1959 were carefully scrutinized and recorded on a graph (Figure 6, page 42). For purposes of the study, all lieutenants were placed in a single category, with captains, majors, and lieutenant colonels segregated by rank. The results were quite different from that envisioned in 1925. This survey revealed that, far from the predicted 90 to 95 per cent, not a officer was considered "average" or less. As a matter of fact, the

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<sup>1</sup>Heinl, XXXXIII, 22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 21.



TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE OF MARINE OFFICERS BY RANK RECEIVING  
"OUTSTANDING" FITNESS REPORTS\*

RANK	PER CENT "OUTSTANDING" (REGULAR DUTIES)	PER CENT "OUTSTANDING" (GEN. VALUE TO SER.)
Second Lieutenants.....	4. %	2 %
First Lieutenants.....	20 %	7 %
Captains.....	33 %	15 %
Majors.....	51 %	32 %
Lieutenants Colonels.....	60 %	39 %
Colonels.....	70 %	55 %

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\* Source: Marine Corps Gazette, April 1959, p.23.



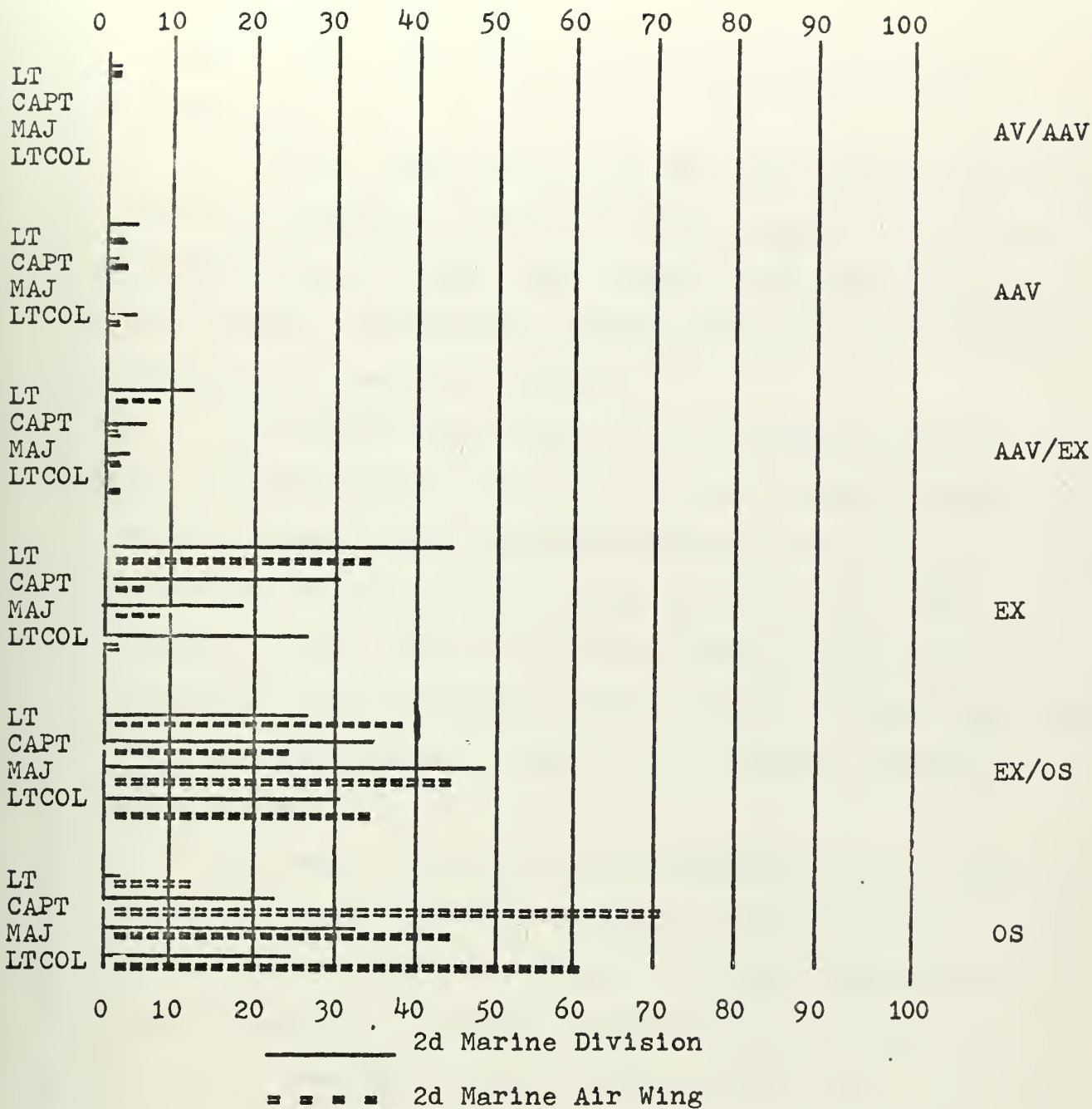


Fig. 6.-- Percentage distribution by rank of fitness reports received by officers of the 2d MAW and 2d Marine Division.<sup>a</sup>  
 a 1959 sample





average captain in the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing was just short of "outstanding."

The Army, using ostensibly the same type appraisal system instrument and operating in a similar environment, conducted a more detailed study of rating escalation. Their findings substantiated the Marine sample's strong indication of the negative skewness, correlating with the system of career appraisal employed.<sup>1</sup>

In connection with studies on the improvement of officers' efficiency reports (fitness reports), the Personnel Research Section of the Adjutant General's Office conducted a detailed study to determine the trend of officers' efficiency reports for the period 1922-1945. The Army's intent was two fold: (1) to find the relationship between the passage of time and the quality of rating, and (2) to attempt to uncover any similarity between the grade of the officer and the rating he received over a period of time.

The results of the study clearly indicated (Figure 7, page 44)<sup>2</sup> a pile-up of ratings in the top two categories of the rating scale, despite the fact that the descriptive wordings of the lower categories had been upgraded in meaning in an attempt to mitigate the psychological impact of words and to encourage a normal distribution of markings.<sup>3</sup> The studies further reported that a distinct grade difference in ratings persisted over the period studied, showing a more pronounced skewness with the higher ranking officers.

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Department of the Army, A Trend Study of Officer Efficiency Ratings for the Period 1922-1945, Personnel Research Report 896, prepared by the Personnel Research Section of The Adjutant General's Office, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 1.



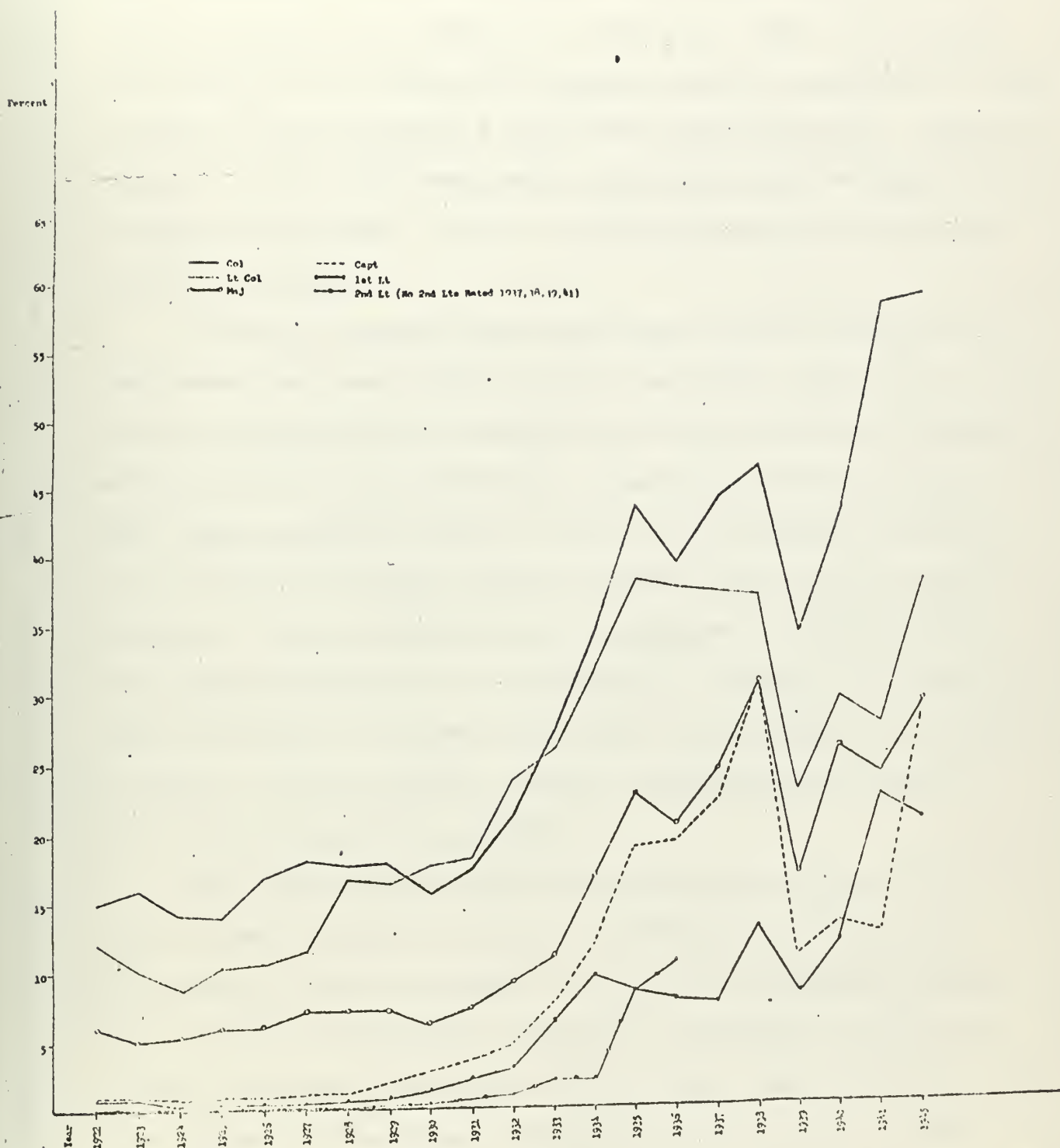


Fig. 7--Percentage of regular Army officers in each grade who received "superior" efficiency ratings for period 1922-1945.



This inflation of ratings had a similar effect in the Marine Corps and the Army, like inflated currency, the really high rating lost value because the inflation had attenuated its true value. Rather than operating as an effective tool of personnel management and career planning, the system of inflating reports produced a free bidding popularity contest. Instead of damning the officer with faint praise, the fitness report has fallen victim to adjectival inflation. In short, the human element has triumphed over the structured system.

In order to correct these shortcomings, the Marine Corps has instituted several less than radical changes to the fitness report over the past few years. During 1959 two important modifications were made to the implementing directive and the mechanics of preparing the semiannual report. First, the provision for showing the report to the individual reported on was revised and now provides that the individual reported on does not see the report. Next, the reporting senior is required to provide a written essay substantiating all marks of outstanding. And, finally, the reporting senior is required to indicate on each report the total number of officers of that rank reported on and the number of those officers he places in each of the five adjectival categories.

The intent of these changes is to force a more realistic distribution or normal (Gaussian) distribution of markings on the rating scale. This approach, it has been claimed, by its new requirement and procedure, would help curb the profligate inflation of over-marking and blunt the discrimination between individuals because of rank. This is the system of career appraisal and performance evaluation the Marine Corps is living with today.





What, if any, is the impact of this evolution of meaningless ratings on the Marine Corps? The meanings are only slightly short of an anathema. Aside from the personal career damage, there is the problem of maintaining the efficiency of the Corps. Since the evolutionary inflation of the career appraisal system gives no true indication of the individual officer's value, it is evident that talented officers are being lost to the Marine Corps.

Yet, there is a certain irony to the problem not immediately perceivable. Conceived three-quarters of a century ago, massaged and manipulated by capricious whims, plagiarized from other systems, escaping any overt philosophical intent and subjectively emasculated, career appraisal has marked time. The collection of motley alterations, when empirically aggrandized, represents little in the way of innovation. A real improvement or change in the environment of career appraisal will require more than just a new form or modification of the old, because the conditions that have deposited us in today's paradox transcends the form of the career appraisal instrument and rests with the philosophy and logic that have permeated the instructions, ideas, and ground rules that reign supreme in the appraisal environment.



### CHAPTER III

#### DEFICIENCIES INFLUENCING APPRAISAL

Few, if any, administrative procedures conclusively justify their existence. The sceptic can especially retain his honest doubts about career appraisal, regardless of any objective evidence that can be ferreted out and laid before him. What we really have, at best, are certain bits of valid evidence which we individually, or sometimes collectively, find helpful in forming judgments about another individual. Usually, in career appraisal and performance decisions, the directly relevant data are woefully inadequate, although realistically they are also far from completely worthless. Appraisals are customarily made on the basis of our impressions and feelings—the result of our unanalyzed previous experience. The major deficiencies of the Marine Corps' present appraisal techniques focus on the need to improve evaluative judgments too often arrived at under conditions insulated from other relevant bodies of knowledge. The analytical logic that has fostered management science should be manifested in any approach to appraisal; although it is incisively clear that the appraisal of an individual's career cannot be reduced to an instrument of management science per se. Analytical logic calls for the administration of appraisal to concern itself not with purely factual data but to make ethical, social and moral assertions which many writers maintain have no place in appraisal techniques or any other body of science.



Herbert A. Simon, a leader in the administrative behavior school of management, comments on this very thought, bringing into serious question any value judgment or decision which involves ethical elements, disdaining any place for them in science:

. . . . An administrative science, like any science, is concerned purely with factual statements. There is no place for ethical assertions in the body of a science. Whenever ethical statements do occur, they can be separated into two parts, one factual and one ethical; and only the former has any relevance to science.<sup>1</sup>

. . . . .  
Factual propositions are statements about the observable world and the way in which it operates. In principle, factual propositions may be tested to determine whether they are true or false—whether what they say about the world actually occurs, or whether it does not.

The question of whether decisions can be correct and incorrect resolves itself, then, into the question of whether ethical terms like "ought," "good," and "preferable" have a purely empirical meaning. It is a fundamental premise of this study that ethical terms are not completely reducible to factual terms.<sup>2</sup>

Simon's point—that there is no way in which to rationally or empirically test the correctness of ethical, social and moral propositions—introduces the bulk of the deficiencies that plague the appraisal system used in the Marine Corps. In order to understand better these multiple forces which are waxing and waning within the appraisal environment, deficiencies must be isolated and examined as they detract from the accomplishment of appraisal objectives.

Appraisal devices like other administrative devices are in need of continual critical and analytical reexamination. What is demanded is not

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 253.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 45-46.





only more factual evidence, although this is valuable, but a broad view of the entire spectrum of relevant information—indirect, intangible, and impressionistic evidence as well as direct statistical measurements. Edward Hekman, President of United Biscuit Company of America, emphasizes this critical need:

Primarily such management skills as willingness to take calculated risks; imagination, creativity and resourcefulness; ability to take responsibility and to delegate it skillfully; ability to set objectives and relate them to the success of the enterprise; ability to motivate and to exert leadership. Secondly, technical skills and knowledge of the job involved.<sup>1</sup>

While pursuing these likely objectives is the intent of this study, a corollary and vitally necessary appendage is the identification of the existing appraisal system's dysfunction. The present appraisal system is really quite innocuous per se; the motivation for this scrutinization is not to correct an egregious wrong; rather it is an entirely congruent antithetical approach to establish a contrary basis for looking at existing conditions.

Despite recent developments in appraisal instruments (forced-choice, forced-distribution, critical incident, etc.), the Marine Corps continues to employ a modified graphic appraisal scale for the evaluation of officers' performance (Figure 5, pages 38 - 39). The limited trait qualifications on the earliest forms (Figure 2, pages 20 - 21) have been broadened into thirteen specific, seven general, and two overall qualification categories to provide a more detailed appraisal of performance efficiency. The two

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<sup>1</sup>"Who Do You Promote?" Dun's Review and Modern Industry (May, 1964), p. 51.



overall adjectival categories usually garner the primary attention of promotion boards and review officers. One additional section of the instrument requires a free written, "concise appraisal of the professional character of the officer reported on."<sup>1</sup>

The appraisal instrument is extremely easy to comprehend and employ. The completion of the instrument is uncomplicated and self-explanatory. The reporting senior simply marks a point on the scale which best characterizes his response to the subordinate's demonstrated possession of the traits being considered. Characterizations requiring illumination or those that cannot be categorized by the structured traits are accounted for by the free written essay.

All appraisal methods may be grouped into three scaling systems: direct comparison scales, linear scales, and behavior sample scales. The method of particular interest to this study is the linear scales which include the graphic, profile, numerical, and percentage scales. Basically, such scales attempt to establish the same standards for all raters by definition of each step of the scale.<sup>2</sup> Numerous attempts at variations in the scale design to correct many of the common rating errors have met with only limited success. Though simple, uncomplicated, clear, and concise, the scale design still has deficiencies which are: (1) common to rating scales in general, and (2) common to military environments.

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Personnel Manual, "General Completion Instructions; Instructions for Completion C," May 12, 1964, Ch. XV, 15068.5f (4).

<sup>2</sup>Dale Yoder, Personnel Management and Industrial Relations (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1945), pp. 343, 350.



## Common Deficiencies of Rating Scales

### Variability

Operating with a highly structured appraisal instrument, such as the present fitness report form, an important shortcoming in the appraisal of Marine Officers is attributable to bias, prejudice, lack of analytical ability, fatuousness, and judgmental errors on the part of the reporting senior. Reporting seniors differ widely among themselves as to the appraisal which each will make on a single subordinate. Certain individuals are consistently hard to appraise; others are easy. Some reporting seniors make more valid appraisals than do others. The effects of leniency or harshness in appraisals have serious influence on the accuracy and validity of evaluations. Such variability precludes the assessment of the reporting senior's subordinates' true characteristics and traits, thus contaminating the environment under which the appraisal is accomplished. Reporting seniors on the whole are acutely aware of this variability error; often it is this knowledge which contributes to the previously discussed inflation of ratings and discredits an important goal of career appraisal—comparability.

A true comparison may be accomplished only when each appraisal is based on criteria or values which are identical for each officer rated. This exactness does not seem possible under the present system because the instructions are not sufficiently explicit to preclude extensive individual interpretation by each reporting senior. Individual interpretation causes wide variability in the application of established values or criteria. Therefore, the fitness profile of any one officer appraised by any number of reporting seniors, over the same period of time, will show variability in direct proportion to the difference in their individual interpretation





of the marking instructions. "Evaluation programs which fall apart or fail to provide useful information often do so because the raters have not been adequately instructed."<sup>1</sup>

Two variable factors are prevalent in the Marine Corps' present system of appraisal. The appraisal is expressed in degrees of the semantical variables "qualification" and "efficiency." Each manifestation of performance except "outstanding" is defined for the reporting senior in terms of varying degrees of "qualification" and "efficiency."<sup>2</sup> However, attempting to relate these two variables to the adjectival categories of the current appraisal instrument (Figure 5, pages 38 - 39) shows that the variables are devoid of lucid meaning because the adjectival categories and the two variables do not correlate. Additionally, the current instruction does not establish criteria for relating the adjectival phraseology and the variables; consequently, each reporting senior is forced to establish his own values for appraisal purposes. The exercise of this value judgment places the appraisal system outside the scope of strictly factual analysis, the door for Simon's criticism and a host of related deficiencies.

#### Reporting appraisal response

Appraisal theory in the past has been either nonexistent or narrowly fragmentary. While appraisal has long been recognized as a legitimate measurement of individual progress, it has escaped the development of a foundation of theory as has been the case for closely related mental testing or

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<sup>1</sup>Henry DeVos (ed.), "Management Controls and Information, The Journal of Accountancy (February, 1965), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Officer Fitness Report, NAVMC 10147-PD (Rev. 2-57), p. 2, Section C.



psychological scaling.<sup>1</sup> This fact contributes immeasurably to the failure of the appraisal response to be truly emulated by the structured appraisal forms.

The reporting senior attempts to make a report upon the past behavior of the subordinate being appraised and his mental appraisal must identify or corrolate with some specific area defined by adjectival rating items. The rating items may vary from "general value to the service," to "personal relations," or "physical endurance," to cite a few possible categories of response which may be required to appraise subordinates. The structured trait categories are further dichotomized into degrees applicable. There is only a random possibility that the structured adjectival trait categories will correspond to the reporting senior's mental appraisal. Further complicating the situation, appraisals are usually limited to some specific time period, arbitrarily set, and usually failing to parallel the subordinate's performance of duty. The appraisal period terminates but the duty goes on and the end accomplishments are still unmeasurable.

Psychologically, mentally equating and recording of responses are predominantly those of recall on the part of the reporting senior. The desired basis of recall is an objective summation of the totality of pertinent past observations of subordinate's behavior. The totality of pertinent past observations, ostensibly at least, must reflect lucidly the subordinate's performance—not the reporting senior's response to that performance. The creditability of the recorded appraisal depends significantly on

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<sup>1</sup>C. I. Mosier, "Psychophysics and Mental Test Theory: Fundamental Postulates and Elementary Theorems," cited by Personnel Research Report 910, Adjutant General's Office, pp. 2-4..



mental/action relationship passing through the following chronological steps:

- (1) performance by the subordinate officer in each of several traits,
- (2) observation of the performance by the reporting senior,
- (3) recall of the observations by the reporting senior, and
- (4) equating the "felt response" with the structured trait categories.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, the veracity of the resulting appraisal is predominantly based upon the adequacy of the latter three steps to convey without attrition or proliferation a true image of the first step. The basic point confronted is: How can the relationship existing between performance and final recorded response be expressed so as to identify this abstraction? The ponderables of this question go unanswered, but are identified as appraisal deficiencies.

#### Leniency error

The tendency of reporting seniors to be overly generous in recording their appraisals of subordinates' performance is a well-documented fact of our appraisal system. The precipitous climb of markings on the rating scale is in no small part attributable to the leniency error.

Leniency in appraisal expresses itself primarily in two ways: First, the arithmetic mean of total appraisals is frequently far in excess of the mean appraisal category characterized as "average." Secondly, the distribution of lenient ratings is generally negatively skewed, rather than

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.





being symmetrically distributed about the mean.<sup>1</sup> That is, reporting seniors have a very strong compulsion to appraise a disproportionately greater number of their subordinates in elevated categories above the mean. The resulting asymmetrical appraisal distribution is a common shortcoming of the traditional structured rating scale.

The tendency of a majority of reporting seniors (not necessarily limited to the Marine Corps) is to avoid giving "below average" appraisals to individuals known by the raters. This failure has resulted in the complete emasculation of the purpose of the appraisal system. Leniency, therefore, brings into focus the serious question of the validity of the majority of annual fitness reports.

In an attempt to offset leniency, and in acknowledging that it is directly a resultant of personal reluctance on the part of the reporting seniors to mark professional associates below average, the Marine Corps instituted a very questionable remedial action in 1959. In order to circumvent the natural, interpersonal ramifications engendered by showing the subordinate how he was appraised, a duplicitious modification was followed. The provision for showing the appraisal instrument to the individual appraised was cancelled and the completed reports were sent directly to Washington by the reviewing officer.<sup>2</sup> To a substantial degree this provision, and the additional requirements for justifying and indicating the total number of subordinates appraised in each category, have gone a long

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<sup>1</sup>Erwin K. Taylor and Roy Hastman, "Relation of Format and Administration to the Characteristics of Graphic Rating Scales," Personnel Psychology, Summer, 1956, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Personnel Manual, Chapter 15, paragraph 15068.7.



way towards correcting the leniency error, but have created greater ills, more fully covered in a later section.<sup>1</sup>

Another concern for investigation is whether degrees of leniency, running from easy to harsh, have influence on the accuracy of the reporting senior's appraisals. The Personnel Research Section of the Army's Adjutant General's Office conducting research on this question found strong indications that hard raters, average raters, and easy raters were approximately equal in the validity of the ratings given.<sup>2</sup>

The danger of leniency, then, appears not to be that the easier appraiser is less accurate, but that he simply equally inflates everyone's appraisal. Indexing reporting seniors is possibly an uncomplicated solution to leniency problems.

#### Central tendency

A constant error closely related to the leniency error is the tendency of reporting seniors to avoid the extremes of the rating scale. Appraising all individuals in a cluster about the average appraisal (not necessarily average in the normal sense of the word) is an all-too-common technique employed by appraisers who really do not know the individuals well enough to appraise traits, do not feel sure of their judgments, or cannot be bothered with taking the time to think through the rating.<sup>3</sup> Due to this central tendency, these ratings lack discrimination and fail to single out

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Howard F. Uphoff, Ph. D., Technical Assistant and Project Coordinator, Personnel Analysis Branch HQMC, December 28, 1964.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Department of the Army, Validity of Ratings by Hard and Easy Raters, Personnel Research Report 908, prepared by the Personnel Research Section of the Adjutant General's Office, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Donald G. Paterson, "Ratings," Handbook of Applied Psychology, Vol. 1 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1950), p. 153.





the average officer as being only average. Instead he is escalated up the rating scale, similar to the officers in the 2d Marine Division and Aircraft Wing (Figure 6, p. 42). This distribution indicates a very pronounced central tendency around the excellent-to-outstanding category.

### Halo effect

The logical difficulty which will be broached here is the fundamental inability of the appraisal system to mitigate personal feelings about the individual, and the manner by which those personal feelings influence or color appraisal of traits. The "halo effect" is one of the most common and pronounced deficiencies manifested by the rating scale appraisal system.<sup>1</sup> The oft-noted halo effect is the tendency for all presumably independent trait categories of the appraisal instrument to be correlated uniformly high.

Research conducted by the Adjutant General's Office, U. S. Army, Tiffin, Cozan and others, has raised questions with respect to the ability of reporting seniors to discriminate between performance in various trait areas.<sup>2</sup> Developing from their writings is the question of the extent to which independent traits being appraised are influenced by each other—technically dubbed the "halo effect."

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth E. Richards, "A New Concept of Performance Appraisal," Journal of Business (July, 1959), p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Department of the Army, A Study of Officer Rating Methodology, III. Order of Rating and Validity of Rating, Personnel Research Report 902, prepared by the Personnel Research Section of the Adjutant General's Office, 1952; Joseph Tiffin, "Merit Rating: Its Validity and Techniques," in M. Joseph Doohar and Vivianne Marquis (eds.), Rating Employees and Supervisory Performance, A Manual of Merit Rating Techniques (New York: American Management Association, 1950); and Lee W. Cozan, "Forced Choice: Better Than Other Rating Methods?" Personnel (May-June, 1955), pp. 80-83.





The "Halo" or "Halitosis" errors<sup>1</sup> have been the focal point of volumes of detailed appraisal literature and internal concern for years.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is entirely conceivable that year-in and year-out reporting seniors brashly commit the identical error without compunction. Once a subordinate has demonstrated ability in some specific trait, for example, "physical endurance," and the performance of the subordinate's job hinges on "physical endurance," other traits likewise emulate "physical endurance." Consequently, while the reporting senior appraises the other traits, he is thinking "physical endurance," and invariably marks the subordinate similarly in all traits. If the "halo effect" is extremely strong, the reporting senior does not consider other traits as being distinct. When marking "military presence" he is thinking "physical endurance," when he marks "force" he is thinking "physical endurance," etc. The separate ratings of the subordinate may be no more than repeated ratings of the subordinate on a single trait, that is, a mentally substituted scale of the reporting senior's belief concerning the subordinate's ability to physically endure, or fulfill other criteria, has been established in place of the formalized traits appearing on the appraisal instrument.

The "halo effect" introduces a spuriously high amount of positive correlation between the various traits rated. A "good fat man" suddenly has no weaknesses, including even "personal appearance" or "military presence"; whereas a "thin trim man" has no virtues. The presence of "halitosis" greatly limits the value of the rating as a counseling device,

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<sup>1</sup>"Halitosis" and "Halo Effect" are used interchangeably in appraisal research to refer to the characteristic or trait to influence the appraisal of others.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Project D-2: Revision of Officers' Fitness Reports, Personnel Analysis and Review Branch, November 1950.



because areas in which the subordinate would benefit from special attention or training are duplicitously concealed. It similarly limits the reliability which can be placed on ratings as an aid in selecting individuals for particular job assignments where specific traits will be nakedly exposed. In reporting his research in these areas, Thomas Ryan laments:

. . . . We lose most of the advantages which might be expected of the graphic rating method if the halo effect is strong, and it no longer has much usefulness. Would it not be better to ask the supervisor to make a single careful rating of the over-all value of the man and let it go at that?<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Ryan possibly has hit upon the key point, for remarkably the "halo effect" is not frequently found in appraised traits that: (a) are not easily observable, (b) are not clearly defined, (c) are not frequently discussed, (d) involve high moral or ethnic importance, or (e) involve reactions with other people.<sup>2</sup>

Reporting senior's "halo" tendency can be circumvented in several ways, the most significant of which, suggests Lee Cozan, is changing a traditional rating scale to some other method such as forced choice.<sup>3</sup> Cozan claims that the reporting senior's "halo" using conventional techniques is favorably attenuated by the fact that only one of the traits under the forced choice system is related to success on the job and only one unfavorable trait is associated with poor performance or personal shortcomings; the reporting senior does not know which is which. However, short of

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas A. Ryan, "Merit Rating Criticized," Personnel Journal (May, 1945), pp. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup>Yoder, p. 362.

<sup>3</sup>Cozan, p. 80.



complete modification of appraisal philosophy, the only way to correct the "halo" tendency in the present appraisal system is to require additional justification for each trait that is marked "outstanding," or to require the reporting senior to answer to his alter ego certain questions about the marks he has awarded a subordinate.

### Deficiencies Common to Military Environments

#### Hierarchical position

There has been a strong tendency for many years in the military service to appraise ranking officers high, and lower ranking officers, low. For example, the samples contained in Figures 1 and 2, pages 16, 20 and 21, all indicate very high negative skewness for higher ranking officers.

The major conclusion to be drawn from these statistics is that the appraisal of officers is considerably influenced by the rank of the officer being evaluated. Ostensibly, the reporting senior has compared subordinates with all officers of equal rank and experience.<sup>1</sup> In the application of such criteria each rank would have an equivalent proportion of officers receiving distributed appraisals. The selection process, which is used as a substantiating argument for this ranking error, does not present a convincing hypothesis.

In 1926, thirteen per cent of the infantry colonels in the Army were rated "superior,"<sup>2</sup> while no infantry second lieutenants were so rated. In 1938, the ratio for Army infantry colonels and second lieutenants

<sup>1</sup>Instructions, Part C of The Appraisal Instrument, Figure 5, pages 38-39.

<sup>2</sup>Army appraisal distributions have been used because the Marine Corps Personnel Analysis Branch declined access to appraisal distribution by rank. There are very strong indications, however, that the same relative distribution prevails in the Marine Corps Officers' appraisals.





appraised as "superior" were thirty-nine and ten per cent, respectively. By recent measure fifty-seven per cent of the colonels are considered "superior" by their reporting seniors, while ten per cent of the second lieutenants are so considered.<sup>1</sup> These figures indicate not only a steady inflation of appraisal judgments, but a clear indication that the "superior" connotation has a much greater affinity for the higher ranking officers. Distortions in appraisal due to rank, comparable to those found in the Army, exist within the Marine Corps. In 1959, Colonel R. D. Heinl, Jr., remarked in a published article:

The higher the rank of the officer reported on, however, the more outstanding he becomes. . . .

Correspondingly, like inflated currency, the really high ratings lose value because they go to almost anybody who manages to keep out of hack. The only things more inflated than today's fitness reports are citations, and awards in Korea were all too often given to do the job which a properly governed system of fitness reporting should have been able to handle.<sup>2</sup>

A considerable degree of the rank distortion seems to be derived from the impact of interpersonal relations on appraisal of individuals. Few studies have actually dealt with the interpersonal relationship between reporting senior and subordinate, or its ramifications for the former's appraisal of the latter.<sup>3</sup> The result of research conducted by the Human Relations Research Group at the University of California gives some

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Department of the Army, The Control of Bias in Ratings: IV. Factor Analysis of Rating Item Content, Personnel Research Report 919, prepared by the Personnel Research Section of the Adjutant General's Office, 1952, pp. 1-4.

<sup>2</sup>R. D. Heinl, Jr., Colonel, USMC, "Fitness Reporting: Some Adverse Remarks. . . , " Marine Corps Gazette (April, 1959), p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Verne Kallejian, Paula Brown, and Irving R. Weschler, "The Impact of Interpersonal Relations on Ratings of Performance," Public Personnel Review (October, 1953), p. 166.



insight into why the interpersonal aspect looms importantly in ranking distortions.

1. Superiors will react to, and place greater importance on, those characteristics of performance which are related to their personal needs.
2. The quality of the relationship between the superior and the subordinate is a determinant of the superior's perception of that subordinate's performance. . . .
3. Superiors will be differentially influenced by the following situational factors: the actual performance itself, the nature of the rating task, the organizational setting . . . .<sup>1</sup>

It stands to reason that greater numbers of higher ranking officers fulfill these criteria, simply because those who have not successfully done so—regardless of relative ability—have been weeded out. This weeding out has not yet manifested itself upon the lower ranking officers.

### Reliability

The lack of reliability is one of the most serious deficiencies of the appraisal system as now practiced. The relative negation of consistency, and the lack of correlation between successive appraisals by the same reporting senior are aggravated by problems of central tendency, halo effect, and judgments of leniency. But in and of itself, the appraisal system must be criticized because of the failure of different reporting seniors to agree in reporting on the same subordinates. In an ideal appraisal situation the appraisal received by an individual should be independent of its

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 169.



source, that is, a subordinate should receive identical appraisals regardless of who awards the mark.<sup>1</sup>

The effects of divergent attitudes are also reflected in the lack of agreement with regard to overall appraisal of performance at different hierarchial levels. The efforts of a closely scrutinized staff officer might be appraised as average by the immediate senior, but construed as below average by a senior one level removed, in consideration of the low efficiency of the reporting unit. In a related phenomenon there are strong indications that the higher up the chain-of-command duties are performed, the higher those duties are appraised. So, theoretically, a subordinate progressing to higher levels of duty with increasing rank could perform each successive job with lower relative degrees of perfection and yet receive steadily inflated appraisals.

#### Frequency of appraisal

How often should the reporting senior formally rate the subordinate? Several arguments can be introduced to support frequent appraisal and about an equal number for more protracted periods of time. Ratings that are made frequently more closely convey current attitudes and impressions. Such appraisals prevent unhealthy situations from going too long unnoticed. But, on the other hand, frequent ratings are more costly, usually are not based on the broad overall view of performance, tend to become pragmatic routines, and unnecessarily complicate the use of appraisals by the detail section and promotion board.

The present use of semiannual reports on all officers has all the disadvantages listed. The drudgery of appraising each officer twice a year

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor and Hastman, p. 186.





has developed a perfunctory, half-hearted, obligatory routine with a consequent marginal yield. By the time a Marine Officer has reached the rank of captain, a minimum of twelve and as many as twenty appraisals have been made on his performance of duties. The necessity for this number of reports as opposed to half as many is seriously doubtful. Whether appraisals are made once or twice a year really has little bearing on decisions based on a series of appraisals over a long period of time. Will twenty reports tell more than ten? I would venture to say they would not, since performance tends to insulate itself from administrative time parameters.

Henry De Vos, Manager, Management Services, American Institute of CPA's, makes this observation about the frequency of appraisals:

. . . But frequent ratings also tend to reflect some particular point which has made an impression on the rater, or which just happens to come to mind when it comes time to rate, rather than an overall evaluation of the ratee's performance. In addition, if supervisors are required to rate too often, they tend to consider it a drudge and develop a mechanical, get-it-over-with approach.<sup>1</sup>

Two qualifications seem in order before leaving the subject of frequency of appraisals. The semiannual appraisal of new officers seems justified on the grounds that closer scrutiny should be maintained early in their careers. Additionally, if, and only if, the formal appraisal was used as a counseling device, the semiannual frequency should be justified. But, under the present system of clandestinely submitting a formal report to be filed for rare promotion boards' use (every six years), or detailing considerations (every three years), annual reports would appear to fulfill the need adequately.

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<sup>1</sup>De Vos, p. 83.



### Economy of appraisal

The management of the fitness report program throughout the Marine Corps is no small job in itself. The paperwork management directly associated with the semiannual appraisal instrument involves the need for: administrative men to prepare the initial report; the appraisee to check accuracy of Section "A" of the report and sign it; the reporting senior who must take extended portions of time to conscientiously complete the appraisal instrument; the reviewing officer who looks over the appraisal instrument; the administrative personnel to process and submit the report; the administrative echelon receiving the report at Headquarters Marine Corps; the Report Section which processes the report and prepares promotion board briefs; and, finally, the filing personnel who maintain the files in which the reports are kept.

The cost of producing and maintaining Headquarters Marine Corps' paperwork, contributed to in no small part by the formal appraisal system, has been estimated by the Management Engineer to amount to \$6,313,092 annually.<sup>1</sup> This figure includes clerical/administrative personnel, office space costs, equipment costs, and expendable material costs at headquarters proper—not the cost of maintaining a normal report feeder system.

In addition to the administrative cost shared by the appraisal system, the Navy Management Office has estimated the cost of completing NAVMC Forms,<sup>2</sup> used by the Marine Corps at a ratio of twenty-five dollars of cost to fill in each one dollar's worth of forms.<sup>3</sup> From these figures it is a

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<sup>1</sup>Management Engineering Brief prepared by the Management Engineer, H.Q.M.C., September 21, 1964, Tab A, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>The NAVMC Form represents standard Navy and Marine Corps Forms printed by the Government Printing Office; the Appraisal Instrument is NAVMC Form 10147-Pd (Rev. 2-57).

<sup>3</sup>Management Engineering Brief, pp. 2-3.



rather elementary mathematical exercise to calculate that the forms and the completion of the forms, twice a year for eighteen thousand Marine Officers, puts the system in the category of a relatively expensive administrative procedure. Nevertheless, as appraisal systems go, the system used by the Marine Corps is relatively inexpensive.

Thomas L. Whisler has made an interesting observation relative to the cost of appraisal systems: "The appraisal plans which appear to be the most effective are those which require the most time and money."<sup>1</sup>

From Mr. Whisler's point of view, and I am not sure he had the paradigm cost of a government bureaucracy procedure in mind, the existing appraisal system might qualify as a good example. Though relative figures have not been developed, the maintenance of a critical-incident appraisal system with its high cost in planners' and appraisers' time, form cost, and cost of those who maintain control over the system would better qualify under Mr. Whisler's description.

In contrasting the more complicated Stevens-Wonderlic Appraisal System, with the traditional rating scale, Western Reserve University's Taylor and Hastman came to these conclusions about appraisal cost:

The over-all findings of this research can, in a sense, be said to be unequivocally negative. While minor differences between the formats and among the administrations were found to exist, none of these was of an order of magnitude adequate to justify the increased complexity and cost of the more elaborate procedures. These negative results, it should be noted, were not a function of the fact that

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas L. Whisler, Appraisal as a Management Tool. Adapted from "Merit Rating: A Management Tool," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1953, p. 477.





the more elaborate techniques were burdened with the defects that usually characterize graphic ratings, but rather that in this instance the traditional graphics were essentially free of such defects.<sup>1</sup>

Taylor and Hastman's research concludes that somewhere the appraisal system must justify the added costs and complexities which are associated with attempting to sophisticate them.

One way of looking at the appraisal system is that it is a technique for getting information about people for purposes having economic value to the organization. The importance of that purpose varies from time to time. Therefore, the system possibly should be sufficiently flexible to allow for contraction and expansion. The expediency of maintaining an appraisal system during wartime would be entirely different from the stated purpose during peacetime. "Some omnibus system, then, is not likely to be economically feasible more than a small part of the time that it is supposed to be in operation."<sup>2</sup>

It seems prudent to reject Whisler's original value/effectiveness intimation and to work out an amalgamation of the various postulations. The best appraisal systems are not the most expensive ones. Rather, the best and most effective system is a careful matching of technique, economy, and the purpose for which the system is used. It must be technically sound, extracting salient information, not biased judgments, and it must also match the value of the information with the cost of obtaining it.

If the Marine Corps' 1950 flirtation with the critical-incident appraisal system had been rejected on the grounds that the appraisal system

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor and Hastman, p. 206.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas I. Whisler and Shirley F. Harper (eds.) Performance Appraisal: Research and Practice (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1962), p. 437.



was not treated as an important planning task, and one in which the cost and contribution of relevant information were not compatible with the purpose, little criticism of its inconclusive trial would be offered.

Too often when it becomes evident that technical perfection cannot be achieved and that those who are supposed to supply and use appraisal information are treating the job with indifference, the whole system is given up as a costly side show.<sup>1</sup> This implies that appraisal information is worthless, an economically and professionally dangerous opinion. Good men get lost and the consequences of haphazard judgments in staffing the organization are too obvious to allow the dismissal of the appraisal system on casual or questionable economic grounds. While the economy criteria must always be important, the ramifications of scrapping the appraisal system on those grounds would be difficult to defend.

### The Appraisal Instrument

The function of the appraisal instrument or device is to provide the reporting senior with a structured document imposing uniform appraisal philosophy, parameters for judgments, aid and uniformity in recording judgmental responses, and simplification and standardization of the evaluation of a large number of appraisals. The significance of these roles in the administration of and control over the career appraisal should not be disparaged. By use of an appraisal instrument better and more nearly accurate appraisal responses can be obtained and recorded than through a less formal method. However, the degree to which the appraisal instrument supports the appraisal system is limited.

During the rush to introduce new philosophies of appraisal far less attention has been directed toward the instrument. This probably is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



acknowledgment of the relatively less important role attributed to the instrument itself.<sup>1</sup> The contribution to accuracy of appraisal any instrument or format can make is limited, since it is not possible for the appraisal instrument to elicit information which the reporting senior does not have, has psychologically discarded, or does not care to give. In other words, the appraisal instrument has definite limitations which it cannot transcend. A well-designed instrument can be a valuable asset to the appraisal system, but even the best designed instruments cannot overcome a poor rater.

Traits or characteristics for which there is no objective measure should not be included. However, the objectivity of the appraisal instrument can be increased by careful definition of the traits and characteristics to be appraised. The selection of traits for the appraisal instrument should reflect a perviousness for observable specific action which will provide the reporting senior with a firm basis for evaluative judgments.

A merit or appraisal instrument should be tailor-made to fit the specific needs of the user. Our management group, the one which would do the rating, selected the factors to be included; the form thus becomes their own and this assures its acceptance.<sup>2</sup>

The generation of officers who sponsored the baptism of the present appraisal instrument is no longer around to call it its own and the instrument's continued acceptance is impugned.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 437.

<sup>2</sup>William B. Hall, Tools for Personnel Relation (New York: American Management Association, 1951), Personnel Series No. 140, p. 33.





The appraisal instrument establishes standards to assist the reporting senior in judging the traits and characteristics of the subordinates he is appraising. "The best instruments emphasize development of performance standards and base appraisal upon achievement and effort toward achievement."<sup>1</sup>

Formulation of standards through the appraisal instrument is not always a valid undertaking. Despite the continuing attempt to appraise the subordinate directly in terms of performance data, there always remains some part of the individual's assignment which cannot be reflected by built-in standards. In such situations the crutching effect of the appraisal instrument is seriously emasculated. The reporting senior finds himself in a weightless limbo struggling to regain the restraints imposed by the appraisal instrument.

The standards imposed by the appraisal instrument should in some way be complementary and compatible with the overall standards established to accomplish organizational objectives. Failure to accomplish these ends seriously discounts the effectiveness of the instrument. The organizational standards of performance and conduct for the Marine Corps, as contained in the Marine Corps Manual, are:

U. S. Marines are characterized by exceptionally high standards of performance and conduct which reflect unswerving loyalty to the nation, devout attention to duty, and gentlemanly demeanor. All Marines are expected to maintain these standards in the performance of their

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<sup>1</sup>Whisler and Harper, p. 437.



duties and the conduct of their personal affairs. Failure to achieve and maintain these standards marks an individual as unfit for promotion or retention in the Marine Corps.<sup>1</sup>

The standards imposed by the appraisal instrument have undergone attrition which detracts from the instrument's support of organizational standards. Studies of the evolution of the appraisal instrument show that continuous use of the device for appraisal has introduced progressive inflation. This introduces serious doubt as to whether the original implicit standard, in any shape or fashion, complements or facilitates the attainment of overall Marine standards of performance and conduct.

#### Judgmental Ability

The most volatile dimension, and the one creating the most precipitous appraisal difficulties, is the ability of reporting seniors to make evaluative judgments about subordinates. There are factors which limit the ability to judge accurately such behavioral characteristics as traits, aspirations, attitudes, abilities, motives, and emotions of subordinates.<sup>2</sup> However, seemingly inured to these ability limitations, the Marine Corps persists in viewing the multitude of reporting seniors as an immutable source of judgmental ability, each with equal ability to judge subordinates within the broad parameters imposed upon all.

Little support can be generated for a method—however necessary to meet administrative requirements—having as its pivotal point the subjective, evaluative judgments of a wide spectrum of personalities, only

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Personnel Manual, Officers and Noncommissioned Officers Fitness Reports, May 12, 1964, Chapter 15, paragraph 15068.

<sup>2</sup>Ronald Taft, "The Ability to Judge People," Psychological Bulletin (January, 1955), p. 1.



remotely subject to constraints. Such a conventional approach to appraisal demands handling with consummate skill and ability by all; in the absence of certitude that such a balanced approach is used by all, some provision should be included to wash out tainted judgments. Douglas McGregor has observed:

The conventional approach . . . constitutes something dangerously close to a violation of the integrity of the personality. Managers are uncomfortable when they are put in the position of "playing God."<sup>1</sup>

The perpetrators of the existing appraisal system cannot continue to violate this philosophy with impunity. The emphasis upon the Marine Officer as a leader, who strives to help his subordinates achieve both their own and unit objectives, is inconsistent with the furtive, judicial role demanded of him by present appraisal plans. If the reporting senior must judge, why should not the quality of judgment be subjected to some method of measurement?

It is no great revelation that the validity of judgments, not only in appraising subordinates, but in dealing with mental abilities, school achievement, etc., vary considerably. Ability to judge is not innate; it is a personality trait which is measurable and correlates positively with intelligence, social skills, emotional adjustment, and self-judgment.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to popular colloquial belief, ability to judge negatively correlates with age, sex, responsibility and social adjustment.<sup>3</sup> Differing methods of

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<sup>1</sup>Douglas McGregor, "An Uneasy Look at Performance Appraisal," Harvard Business Review (May-June, 1957), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Taft, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.





measuring the ability to judge have been identified, and the implications of these studies lucidly expose some of the implicit limitations engendered by evaluative judgments in appraisal. The measurement of personal traits, correlating strongly with ability to judge and transferable to the military environment, introduces difficulties; studies examined seem to provide ample grounds for describing some conditions which constitute "good" or "bad" judges of people.

G. W. Allport suggests that the ability to judge others is analogous to esthetic ability in that it is neither entirely specific nor entirely general. He comments, in summarizing:

It would be unreasonable, therefore, to expect a judge of people to be uniformly successful in estimating every quality of every person. . . . It seems more of an error, however, to consider the ability entirely specific than to consider it entirely general.<sup>1</sup>

The appraisal of a Marine Officer by the reporting senior demands the ability to make specific and general analytical and nonanalytical judgments. He is called upon to use a naïve type of intuitive method to judge some traits and analytical logic to deduce others. He receives no formal training per se in the use of analytical methods of making these judgments, and even the crude nonanalytical intuitive ability to judge subordinates is distorted by the effects of empathy, and the unconscious desire for ego emulation. Vernon identified four individual dimensions of judgment, closely related to Allport's specific and general categories: ability to judge self, to judge acquaintances, to judge strangers, and to judge

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<sup>1</sup>G. W. Allport, Personality: A Psychological Interpretation (New York: Henry Holt, Inc., 1937), p. 512.



character sketches of strangers.<sup>1</sup> However, no consistency existed for the individual's ability to judge all dimensions which is exactly the demand levied upon the reporting senior twice each year.

Allport's dictum seems to be justified by the circumstances which are prevalent in military appraisal environments. The degree to which a reporting senior can make accurate judgments about others is a function of his general ability to judge specific situational and environmental factors, but the greater his general ability to judge, the less will be the relative influences of specific factors.<sup>2</sup> The specific factors influencing judgments by the reporting senior include: personality of subordinate, the relationship between the reporting senior and subordinate, and the specific traits being judged. This indicates that the more skilled the reporting senior becomes in handling these specific traits, the more weight he places on other, not so familiar, general requirements.

The ideal solution to the enigma presented by shifting relative influences of specific factors of judgment is to determine the answer to this question: What characteristics of good judges of others can be singled out to help explain the function of judgment as exercised by the reporting seniors? As indicated before, the test of ability to judge has been correlated with intelligence, social skills, emotion adjustment and self-judgment.

Allport's summation of the relationship between ability to judge others and intelligence is that:

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<sup>1</sup>P. E. Vernon, "Some Characteristics of the Good Judge of Personality," Journal of Social Psychology (February, 1933), pp. 41, 42-57.

<sup>2</sup>Allport, p. 512.



Experimental studies have found repeatedly that some relationship exists between superior intelligence and the ability to judge others . . . even with a high and narrow range of intelligence. . . . Understanding people is largely a matter of perceiving relations between past and present activities, between expressive behavior and inner traits, between cause and effect, and intelligence is the ability to perceive just such relations as these.<sup>1</sup>

Allport indicates a strong positive relationship between intelligence and ability to judge others analytically. This, of course, is not to say that a Phi Beta Kappa key guarantees a perspicacious and incisive appraisal or lucid recording of those responses on the structured appraisal instrument. However, this correlation might provide an indexing criterion which would separate the use of intelligent, logical, analytical, judgmental ability from fatuous and nonanalytical judgments. The existing appraisal situation allows the extremes of judgment ability to be expressed on the appraisal instrument without being weighted.

D. L. Watson has investigated attitudes toward social relationships and insufficient experience with a wide range of people as a criterion for others.<sup>2</sup> There seems to be good reason to make an analogy between his finding and possible constraints operating upon the reporting senior. He points out, in his discussion of whether professors or clinicians are capable of lucid judgments—that many professors and clinicians tend to live in isolation from the general life experiences of the people whom they are endeavoring to understand. With the reporting senior this is not usually true, but the military cast system has constructed rigid social

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 514.

<sup>2</sup>D. L. Watson, "On the Role of Insight in the Study of Mankind," Psychoanalysis Review (July, 1938), p. 358.





barriers which are seldom transgressed. The reporting senior, in many cases by design and in others of necessity, is often completely impervious to the subordinates he should understand in order to make analytical appraisal judgments.

Emotional stability and character integration on the part of the reporting senior are important factors in his ability to make appraisal judgments. It may be argued that the well-adjusted person is less subject to demanding of others emulation of himself than is a poorly adjusted person, being able to stand detached and therefore judge better.<sup>1</sup> However, it is also possible to argue that a poorly adjusted person, though aware of his emotional difficulties, is more sensitive to similar difficulties in others.

Ability to judge others on analytical modes (as opposed to nonanalytic) correlates positively with emotional adjustment, presumably the more psychologically significant aspect of this correlation is that poor judges tend to be poorly adjusted, and, therefore, probably more likely to allow personal biases to affect their judgments. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Self-insight or self-knowledge and the insight and knowledge of others are indispensable of each other. In many studies it has been found that the judge tends to rate himself high on admirable traits and low on reprehensible ones.<sup>3</sup> This interrelationship of self-insight and ability to judge others can saliently affect the credulity of responses on the formal appraisal instrument. Reporting seniors who show insight into their own status with respect to their peers tend to appraise their subordinates more

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<sup>1</sup>Taft, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 17.



accurately on these traits.<sup>1</sup> The ramifications of this hypothesis have important significance in assessing the validity with which the appraisal instrument has portrayed an individual officer's traits or simply emulated the reporting senior's alter ego.

A final point of concern, when considering the ability to make judgments is the relationship of judgability and attitudes towards social relations. Are good judges those who are themselves more difficult to judge? Taft suggests this would seem a valid supposition on at least two grounds: As a general rule people cannot understand, accurately appraise, or comprehend people who are more subtle and complex than they themselves are. Second, good judges tend to be socially less expressive than are poor judges.<sup>2</sup> Appraisal, however, does not always allow for consideration of sophistication of relationships, and oftentimes the contest between appraiser and appraised becomes an ill-structured match of judgability operating against the esoteric parameters of a social vacuum.

Recognizing many of these inequities of human judgability, Arch Patton has made this illuminating suggestion:

Experience has shown that translating short-term company objectives into 12-month goals for individual executives is best done by setting up both quantitative and qualitative tasks to be accomplished during the period. In other words, executive responsibilities, include (a) those that can be measured, such as sales, behind-schedule production, or credit losses; and, (b) those that must be judged, made up of the intangibles that arise when an executive develops a new process, establishes

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 21.



a training program, improves the quality of engineering candidates, and the like.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Patton is facing up to the incongruities of appraisal judgments which the Marine Corps has chosen to ignore. The separation of the two—measurement of quantitative factors, and judgment of qualitative factors—induces a deeper awareness of the important role played by both in the fulfillment of objectives. It also allows for the mitigation of the volatile human judgment element, which is difficult to index and potentially destructive of the viability of the appraisal system.

#### Appraisal Improvement

Recognition of the deficiencies found in all appraisal systems is vital to an understanding and interpretation of existing systems. Although the delineation of these deficiencies as they impinge on successful appraisal is considered important, there is no doubt that the most fallible element is the human element—the appraiser himself. A specific solution to all the enumerated deficiencies has not been postulated. No single solution exists. However, considering that the majority of the deficiencies are dynamic rather than structural, a salient approach toward the mitigation of the situation would be to consider edification of the appraiser.

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<sup>1</sup>Arch Patton, "How to Appraise Executive Performance: Planned Performance," Harvard Business Review (January-February, 1960), Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 63-70.





## CHAPTER IV

### COMMUNICATION OF APPRAISAL RESULTS

"We wander through life," wrote Albert Schweitzer,

in a semi-darkness in which none of us can distinguish exactly the features of his neighbor; only from time to time, through some experience that we have with our companion, or through some remark that he passes, he stands for a moment,<sup>1</sup> close to us, as though illuminated by a flash of lightning.

Thus, the noted doctor has hit upon the key that the mathematical theory of communication seeks to explain. Communication is the distinctive human characteristic that permits the individual to eliminate uncertainty by enabling him to contact others and have them contact him.

The specific intent of appraisal is to provide a formal "moment of illumination" in which the subordinate is able to see himself as others see him. To be effective there must be reciprocity of communication. An implicit, if not always explicit, purpose of appraisal communication is to increase the subordinate's motivation to do a better job through exchange of ideas about individual and organizational objectives. A number of writers such as McGregor, Likert, and Maier believe that the whole scheme of appraisal is precipitously perched upon the ability of senior and

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<sup>1</sup>Lawrence A. Appley, Effective Communication on the Job (New York: American Management Association, 1956), p. 5, quoting Albert Schweitzer.



subordinate to exchange appraisal information.<sup>1</sup> Their criteria for an effective and vital appraisal system would brand certain features of the Marine Corps appraisal system as extremely archaic.

Basic considerations of the communications role of appraisal are the conditions deemed necessary for the enlightened motivation, vitalization and growth of men in their organizational roles. These considerations, although not offered as being all-inclusive, are the points with the highest degree of transferability to the service environment:

- A. A subordinate needs to know what is expected of him.
- B. A subordinate needs to know how he is doing in absolute and relative terms.
- C. A subordinate must be able to obtain assistance as needed.<sup>1</sup>

Each of these considerations is inexorably related to the "feedback" or communication of appraisal results, taking particular caution that this vital link is completely pervious to factors which impinge upon successful accomplishment of organizational objectives.

#### Appraisal "Feedback"

Appraisal ratings have little practical purpose if appraisal results are buried in filing cabinets for possible future use, and the appraisee

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<sup>1</sup>R. Likert, Patterns of Management (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1959); N. R. F. Maier, The Appraisal Interview (New York: Wiley, 1958); and D. McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1959).

<sup>2</sup>Alvin Zander, Performance Appraisals: Effects on Employees and Their Performance (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The Foundation for Research on Human Behavior, 1963), p. 44.



left to speculate how his performance of duty measures up. Appraisees must be informed relative to how they are doing and, in many cases, how they might do better.

Having determined by the completion of the appraisal instrument where performance falls in the continuum from outstanding to poor, it is necessary to do something about the findings. One of the common and recurring problems of career appraisal is that lower echelon officers come to believe "nothing happens" as a result of the admittedly time-consuming appraisal effort.<sup>1</sup> The only results of the appraisal system readily attributable to the appraisal effort are promotion results. Unfortunately promotion usually covers a wide spectrum of appraised types, from the indifferent to outstanding.

There can be little doubt that "feedback" of information is a critical key to the viability of management science in the military or any other environment. It is commonly cited as one of the accepted steps in the cycle of planning—action—measurement—feedback—new planning—new action, widely used to maintain organizational homeostasis.<sup>2</sup> It is also a major part of respected theory in learning, teaching, and development; a person needs accurate information about his endeavors if he is to modify and improve them. It seems the same application of basic logic to the appraisal environment would support the dire necessity for "feedback" in career appraisal. Such an assumption, though steadfastly ignored within parochial appraisal environments, has been adequately validated by communication, learning and development theory. This opens a Pandora's box of possible ramifications for the

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<sup>1</sup>Arch Patton, "How to Appraise Executive Performance," Harvard Business Review (January-February, 1960), Vol. 38, No. 1, 68.

<sup>2</sup>Zander, p. 5.





appraisal system whose whole purpose for existence pivots on the modification and improvement of individual endeavors.<sup>1</sup>

For various reasons, reporting seniors are often reluctant to talk frankly with their subordinates about their performance of duty, and to analyze and discuss their various strengths and weaknesses. The primary reason is probably that they do not know quite how to begin what appears to be a very complex, demanding job—a job that has considerable psychological and social implications for the subordinate, putting the job beyond the capabilities of many reporting seniors. Unfortunately, the ideal opportunity to accomplish this appraisal discussion with his subordinates, and the only real leverage working for communication, have been negated by the 1959 cancellation of the requirement that the subordinate sign the appraisal instrument;<sup>2</sup> subsequently the breakdown of appraisal communication has proliferated. Without the pragmatic requirement for individual perusal of the appraisal instrument, a planned program to counsel the subordinate relative to his performance and development has been surrendered to chance.

Bernard J. Covner, Product Development Coordinator, Dunlap and Associates, Inc., asked this relevant question: "Why communicate the results of appraisal ratings?"<sup>3</sup> This seems an appropriate question for reporting seniors to direct to themselves. Most appraisal systems in which a report is made to the appraisee are based on the assumption that he wants

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps PERS. Manual, "Officer and Non-commissioned Officer Fitness Reports," May, 1964, Chapter 15, paragraph 15068.1B.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard J. Covner, "The Communication of Merit Rating: A Philosophy and a Method," Effective Communication on the Job, eds. M. Joseph Dooher and Vivienne Marquis (New York: American Management Association, 1956), p. 161.



to know. Is this a correct assumption? Do systems that conceal appraisal results, good or bad, stand a better chance of maintaining less emotionally influenced performance levels? Mr. Covner answers the question:

Because, for improvement to occur the rated employee must sooner or later know specifically about the qualities of his performance. This is so simple a fact that it is amazing that it is so frequently overlooked. To inform a person about his performance is to apply one of the best known and most successful learning principles—knowledge of results.<sup>1</sup>

The presence or absence of this condition, "knowledge of results," is quite evident in the daily working environment.

It is not uncommon to find others who, in fellow officers' eyes, are not contributing maximum effort, but who think of themselves as sacrificing martyrs; or officers with insatiable ambitions who affront the military profession with consummate mediocrity. Both are common step-children of uncommunicated results of their endeavors.

Knowledge of results is so irrefutably important that it is often the victim of administrative atrophy. The guiding principle focusing attention on this axiom is the old truism that we do not see ourselves as others do. Therefore, the appraisal process is seldom a static one, and the communication portion must be pervious to the dynamics prevailing within the ever-changing military environment. What goes unsaid today may never find its moment here and now within a rapidly changing sphere of interest; more important, things left unsaid lose a high degree of cogency if and when they are finally communicated. Even granting timely and incisive communication of appraisal results, the strong influence of the axiom is difficult to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 161-162.





fathom. In his research on social conditions affecting evaluations, Alvin Zander observed:

Even though an elaborate performance appraisal system exists, one that provides employees information about how they are judged by others, the fact remains that in the long run P [person] decides upon his own evaluation of himself. This personal evaluation, we assume, is the one that really effects his beliefs and behavior. We also assume that a P desires to evaluate his performance as well as reasonably possible and that his behavior in an appraisal interview is often affected by this desire.<sup>1</sup>

How, then, should a reporting senior provide for communication of appraisal information to the subordinate? With the complexities introduced it is not all a matter of simply communication without planning. Regardless of the reporting senior's unilateral decision that appraisal information should be shared, there is no guarantee of accomplishing that objective. Reporting seniors who do counsel subordinates on appraisal results, and still fail to obtain the results expected, should look with a jaundiced eye at the communication method used, realizing that they are dealing in an esoteric area that has many subtle influences. Two questions that expose the dynamic interpersonal implications are pertinent to the reporting senior's communication formula:

In discussing a man's weaknesses, what can be done to motivate him to change—assuming that straightforward telling or asking does not really come to grips with the basic problem? How can he be helped to look at his own behavior more objectively?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Zander, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Spencer J. Hayden, "Getting Better Results from Post-Appraisal Interviews," Effective Communication on the job, eds. M. Joseph Dooher and Vivienne Marquis (New York: American Management Association, 1956), pp. 193-94.





Coping with this new dimension introduces the true significance of the appraisal communication problem.

### Dynamic Appraisal Communication

Success in appraisal communication depends to a considerable degree on the personality characteristics of the parties involved—the subordinate, the reporting senior—and several external factors usually controlled or influenced by the reporting senior. It cannot be pathetically keyed on downward communication principles, but rather on an impartial balance of communicating and listening ability.<sup>1</sup>

There is a very important distinction between coaching and counseling in the communication of appraisal information. Subordinates seldom resent advice on techniques or methods of self-improvement. Coaching goes on every day in the service environment—every time a senior advises, tells, asks a pointed question, conveys facts, etc. It is a natural, organizationally centered imparting of skill usually falling within the "zone of acceptance" of each individual.<sup>2</sup>

When personal attitudes, feelings or egos are involved, the relationship becomes quite different. Attitudes are not changed by telling, advising or demonstrating. They are not changed by threat, coercion or conditioned reflex. Such attitudes as crop up relative to personal performance must be anaesthetized by skillful application of counseling techniques. The reporting senior must harness his authoritarian mantle, he remains the strong leader, he dominates the communication; however, he acts the part of the guide through incisive and thought-provoking questions. During this

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Rogers, for example, has said that the "biggest block to personal communication is man's inability to listen intelligently, understandingly, and skilfully to another person," (with F. J. Roethlisberger, "Barriers and Gateways to Communication," Harvard Business Review, July-August, 1954), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Hayden, p. 191.



session conformity is surrendered to introspection. The acceptance and understanding of the appraisal communication will be influenced by the interpersonal relationship that exists between reporting senior and subordinate. Often the critical issue will be the way in which the communication is perceived and reacted to, rather than what was recorded on the appraisal instrument. Influencing personality factors include:

Concept of Self. One very strong characteristic manifested in most appraisal situations is the "concept of self" or "self-image." Most subordinates have strong preconceived ideas about the kind of person they are, technically a "concept of self." A communication of negative ideas by the reporting senior which denigrates, or is inconsistent with this "concept of self," regardless of validity, will be rejected, either overtly or covertly, through psychological expedients. Research conducted at the Foundation for Research on Human Behavior, Ann Arbor, Michigan, enumerated a variety of methods used by individuals to ensure that they will evaluate themselves favorably, regardless of external influences.

First, and most logical, the individual may actually try to improve his performance so that it supports his "concept of self." Second, he may indiscriminately lower his "concept of self" in order to reduce the discrepancy between his concept and the actual appraisal. Third, the individual may simply rationalize his appraisal, helping him to believe that he is not responsible for the discrepancy between his "concept of self" and the appraisal.<sup>1</sup>

Level of Aspiration. The subordinate's perception of and reaction to specific points of the appraisal will be significantly influenced by his

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<sup>1</sup>Zander, p. 11.



individual desires and aspirations. Therefore, the degree to which he will understand and accept appraisal of his performance and behavior depends on his "level of aspiration"—"to be one of the gang," "to just get by," "to put in my three years and scram," "to become Commandant," etc. The "level of aspiration" should be comprehended by both parties to the appraisal. These aspirations, then, can be used as objectives of common understanding and can be used as a criterion for judging the goodness or badness of a performance.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, it should be realized that the subordinate's "level of aspiration" can be and is influenced by senior associates and the general environment in which he subsists. However, there is no significant guarantee that influence of this nature will affect the internal "level of aspiration," as opposed to a superficial alteration of stated aspirations. The question then becomes: Under what conditions will the stated and internal "levels of aspiration" be the same? Within the realm of appraisal considerations they seem to be the same only when the subordinate decides to accept externally imposed levels, not to avoid punishment or to earn a reward, but because he is convinced that the external standard is suitable for him.<sup>2</sup>

Defensiveness and Pessimism. The relationship between the subordinate's ability to accept critical appraisal and his adjustment to life in general are corollary phenomena. Serious maladjustments and character deficiencies can be closely associated with manifestation of strong defensiveness and pessimism toward authority, society, the Marine Corps, etc.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.





Individuals having such maladjustments meet constructive appraisal suggestions with silence, indifference, or intractable counterarguments, all aimed at sustaining a wall or shell around that which they consider sacrosanct. All the appraisals in the world cannot have a moment's effect, other than further ostracizing the individual, unless communications are tailored to the situation.

Foggy Objectives. Quite often the objectives of the organization mean different things to various echelons of command. Consequently, the reporting senior and the subordinate never quite communicate, because their objectives are not mutually compatible. The results are often that important goals such as improved performance, planning, diagnosis of inadequate performance, etc., are not aspired to or achieved by the subordinate simply because he is unaware of such goals. His concerns are more immediate and his performance is aimed at immediate objectives. Appraisal must be related to visible and clearly understood objectives so that appraisal can be rational rather than arbitrary and misunderstandings can be reduced in the appraisal interview.<sup>1</sup>

Different Terminology. The formal appraisal instrument seldom is constructed in such a way that it facilitates communication of appraisal data from the reporting senior to the subordinate. The semantical implications of such relative terms as "average," "particularly desire to have," "force," "presence of mind," etc., even if precisely defined on the appraisal instrument, create difficulties in equating the terms, and in the connotations of the terms in the mind of both parties. The meanings of terms oftentimes take on three dimensions: one which is understood by the reporting senior, one by the subordinate, and still a third quality assigned

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.



by the reviewing officer or promotion boards. The incorporation of explicit terminology standards on the appraisal instrument eliminates some of this difficulty, but the only adequate communication method is the reduction of the appraisal information to the subordinate's level of understanding.

Behavior and Reputation of the Reporting Senior. The informal communication network has important influences on the manner in which subordinates accept or reject formal communication of appraisal information by the reporting senior. The reporting senior who, during the appraisal interview, takes on "airs" which are diametrically opposed to his normal reputation, creates suspicion or is soon counteracted by subordinate hostility and withdrawal.<sup>1</sup> The reporting senior's fairness and judgment are often silently impugned, if his appraisal of certain subordinates does not conform to the informal norms established by the group.<sup>2</sup> Under such circumstances the veracity of the subordinate's own appraisal will similarly be questioned, producing strong inclinations for the appraisal program as a whole to be rejected, not in a physical sense, for a subordinate is not given such latitude, but informally. Lest some readers attempt to mitigate the importance of the informal acceptance, the examination of a primary construct for sound organizational functioning outlined in Bureau of Naval Personnel Instructions possibly will be convincing: "The dynamics of organization are those aspects in which people as individuals are the basic considerations, with the problem of 'organizing people' being the primary concern."<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Earl G. Planty and William MacHaver, "Stimulating Upward Communication," Effective Communication on the Job, eds. M. Joseph Doohar and Vivienne Marquis (New York: American Management Association, 1956), pp. 141-143.

<sup>2</sup>Likert, pp. 26-27.

<sup>3</sup>U. S. Department of the Navy, Bureau of Naval Personnel, Organization Planning for Naval Units, NAVPERS 18371A, 1964, p. 1.



implication is not colloquial brainwashing by the so-called "happiness school,"<sup>1</sup> rather it is an accepted criterion for effective organizational planning. The behavior of the reporting senior to some degree must consider the ramifications of group norms upon the effectiveness of the organization.

Each of the enumerated examples has salient implications for the dynamics of appraisal communication. Communication trussed up in confusion, semantics, mechanics, and formal systems of organizational exchange are inadequate for the effective interchange of appraisal objectives. Dynamic appraisal communication, then, provides an uncomplicated insight into the important consequences of motivation, morale, and vitality within the organization.

#### A communication technique

". . . talking over your ratings is admittedly tough, particularly when it means exploring sensitive areas—weaknesses that a man may be touchy or defensive about."<sup>2</sup>

Because of the previous scarcity of simple, uncomplicated expressions of the vital necessity of a constant "feedback" through appraisal communication between reporting seniors and subordinates, the responsibility for appraisal and counseling with the attendant development of officers has been seriously emasculated. It seems certain that unless a high

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<sup>1</sup>The term "happiness school" has reference to the human relations aspects of organizational function endorsed by many of the cited writers.

<sup>2</sup>Earl G. Planty and Carlos E. Efferson, "Counseling Executives After Merit Rating or Evaluation," The Development of Executive Talent, eds. M. Joseph Doohar and Vivienne Marquis (New York: American Management Association, 1953), p. 237.





organizational objective explicitly solicits a planned approach to appraisal communication, circumstances will continue to favor a chance exchange between senior and subordinate. Yet the knowledge and concern about human understanding and counseling flowing out of the specialized realm of the administrative behavior and behavioral science schools stirs the interest of the conscientious administrator.

If the communication of information is critical to the viability of the appraisal system, if bias and misunderstanding are to be overcome, if impediments to organizational effectiveness are to be removed, a technique for the exchange of appraisal information must be fostered. How should appraisal results be communicated? A quick review of the basic objective indicates that the methods required for accomplishing them are threefold: (1) transmitting appraisal information, (2) influencing attitudes of subordinates towards appraisals, and (3) influencing skills.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, anything that is known about these three areas will help establish effective communication techniques. However, from such a maelstrom of possible ideas we must extract the techniques which are most pertinent to specialized appraisal communication between reporting senior and subordinate.

Research support for the basic notion that there is value in having the subordinate participate in the review of appraisal information per se has not been uncovered. However, a wide area of surveillance has been opened up by advancing the hypothesis that communication techniques are exchangeable between areas of application. There are available results from studies of situations other than appraisal communication which indicate that

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<sup>1</sup>Covner, p. 165



participation by a person in interpersonal discussions strongly enhances the effectiveness of the result of that discussion.<sup>1</sup>

The interview seems to be the technique with the highest degree of transferability to the appraisal communication situation. A method for conducting such an interview incorporates ideas from the writings of several specialists in interpersonal relations, notably Likert, McGregor, Maier, and Rogers.<sup>2</sup> Extrapolating from the writings of these specialists it is possible to postulate the feasibility of appraisal communication—through informal interview techniques—that is applicable to the Marine Corps' reporting senior-subordinate atmosphere. Such communications are envisioned as playing a major role in sustaining adequate performance, discovering reasons for inadequate performance, and improving performance; they can be useful in sharing certain attitudes and information between the opposite poles of the appraisal environment. A program of appraisal communication interviews should include but not be limited to these considerations:<sup>3</sup>

1. Be prepared for the appraisal interview by reviewing the subordinate's completed appraisal report, his chronological record of services and other pertinent items of significance which will help focus the logic behind appraisal ratings. Try to be congenial towards the subordinate, and attempt to anticipate his frame of mind and possible questions.

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<sup>1</sup>Zander, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>McGregor, Maier, Likert, Rogers, supra, pp. 80-81; 85. 09 80

<sup>3</sup>Covner, p. 165.



2. Attempt to put the subordinate at ease by taking definite steps to be friendly, sincere, and courteous and to create an unhurried tempo.

3. Discuss the intentions and purposes of the appraisal system and the reasons for conducting the interview. By this tack, attempt to eliminate the divergent interpretation given the appraisal system by subordinates.

4. Present highlights of the good points recorded on the appraisal instrument. Even under the most extreme circumstances, with the most intractable miscreant, usually some favorable characteristic can be uncovered with which to open the interview. If favorable points do not exist, buffer the introduction of bad points. After the highlights have been given, go into detail on the overall appraisal. Pause to allow the subordinate time to reflect and comment, if he likes, on what you have related to him. Present detailed appraisal of strong points, pause for comment, then detail weak points, pause for comments. Finally, very tactfully but forcefully, specific ways in which the subordinate might improve should be broached. This phase cannot deal with generalities, euphuism or ambiguities; it must be specific, to the point, understandable and realistically possible of accomplishment.

5. A follow-up cursory examination for improvement in the subordinate's work should be accomplished before the next appraisal period comes around.

The five points outlined for successful appraisal communication based on the interview are not offered as a succinct list of rigidly enforceable administrative procedures. Due to personality quirks the





subordinate may not want to listen to strengths and weaknesses, but would rather talk out a particular problem. It is more important that the reporting senior be a good listener under these circumstances and that the subordinate be allowed to discuss problems important to him which may have a very salient, indirect ramification on the appraisal. Earl G. Planty of Johnson and Johnson has rated listening as one of the superior's most important functions:

Listening is time-consuming. Many executives feel that they are too involved with daily problems and responsibilities to provide adequate time for listening fully to their subordinates' ideas, reports and criticism. Nevertheless, many time-consuming problems could be minimized or eliminated if superiors were free to listen to their employees, for in listening they can discover solutions to present problems or anticipate causes for future ones.<sup>1</sup>

There are, of course, other appraisal communication techniques which are congruent to the interview. One such technique especially applicable to appraisal interviews is the "turnback."<sup>2</sup> When the subordinate's question has the effect of compromising the reporting senior's position or disrupting his equanimity, it is a good strategy to turn the question back to the subordinate before attempting to answer. This is done to achieve two objectives: find out more background on the question from the subordinate and allow time for calm to return, and presenting an interview climate more conducive to unemotional exchange. Basically the objective of the suggested interviewing techniques is predicated on the consonance of the unemotional exchange and achievement of understanding between the principals of the interview.

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<sup>1</sup>Planty and MacHaver, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Covner, p. 167.



### The Objective of Appraisal Communication

The appraisal interview has a practical and useful goal in the spectrum of command concern. The primary purpose for conducting the appraisal interview is basically that it provides the commander a tool to deal with the dynamics of organization which have a salient influence on the mechanics through which a command directs, coordinates and controls activities. The organization structure is only an index of relations between functions, physical factors and personnel. At some point and to some degree the organizational mechanics of the formal structure must acquiesce the dynamic aspects dealing with these human relations problems. It appears this can best be accomplished by achieving certain appraisal objectives that are understood by both the reporting senior and the subordinate. First, getting the subordinate to accomplish his assigned duties in a better manner, thus contributing not only to his own good but to the common good of the organization. The interview provides the opportunity to inform the subordinate relative to organizational standards, organizational preferences in quality, quantity, methods of work, and a better understanding of objectives.

Second, effective appraisal communications provide the subordinate a clear picture of how he is doing, with emphasis on his good and bad qualities. This eliminates the situation under which the subordinate's self-appraisal is sharply at variance with his reporting senior's appraisal, causing serious human relation dysfunctions, which have precipitous influences on a stable system of well-defined jobs.

Third, the discussion of plans for personal improvement and projects, for the better utilization of the subordinate's strengths, fosters a



workable field of knowledge dealing with activities, attitudes, and relationships among people at work.

Fourth, the opportunity to build strong, personal relationships and command allegiance between the reporting senior and his subordinates in which both communicate frankly about the compatibility of organizational and personal objectives, how this is to be accomplished, improvements possible and how this all may be attained.

Finally, appraisal communication can liberate the individual from the clandestine and apothosized atmosphere surrounding the surreptitious, stealthy manner in which today's career appraisal system is executed. Co-existently, such procedures can contribute to the elimination of undue anxiety, tension, and uncertainty which run rampant under a system whereby the individual does not know where he stands, except through ex post facto notices of nonpromotion, and so forth.





## CHAPTER V

### APPRAISAL IN A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

A thought from Galileo's anachronous, yet strangely pertinent, philosophy, "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself,"<sup>1</sup> has evident implications for the investigation of appraisal's role in the objectives of career development within the Marine Corps. Having investigated the implications and shortcomings of appraisal for subordinates, reporting seniors and the interaction within the group, attention will now be directed to the utilization of appraisal information in planning, managing, and developing the military career.

The approach to this phase of the research will continue the anti-thetician's view of existing conditions, a comparison of those conditions with another appraisal environment to develop a perspective, and finally a projection into the future of the possible ramifications of appraisal upon future leadership, given a fixed hypothesis. Each has important roles in the consideration of career appraisal outside the immediate perspective of the reporting senior and the subordinate, and within the broader implications of appraisal in the context of career planning.

Under present conditions, at home and abroad, it is obviously not enough for the Marine Corps to provide only the leaders necessary to command them in battle. Today many of these leaders are called upon to work closely

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<sup>1</sup>Merril G. Hatch, "Effects of Interpersonal Communication on Group Solving" (unpublished student thesis, U. S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1961), p. ii, quoting Galileo.



with foreign affairs experts, industrial managers, scientists, labor leaders, educators, politicians, economists, and foreign governments. They participate in the drafting and promotion of legislation in the preparation of the national budget, and in determining the American position on a wide variety of foreign policy issues. This all points up the fact that, regardless of Colonel George Cotton Gilliland's [USMC (Ret.)] comment, "when things get rough, they will send for the heroes to replace the military politicians"<sup>1</sup>—nonetheless the major part of a military man's career is spent in areas other than on a battle field. Therefore, the traits to be nurtured need to be similarly aligned.

#### Today's Environment

The security and prestige of the United States depend in large measure on the skill possessed by the career officers of its military services. Today's central role of the military officer in world affairs is mute testimony to the importance of developing the type officer who manifests those traits which are compatible with this role. The development of judgment, decisiveness, determination, integrity, industriousness and courage are all necessary in the development of Marine Officers who can meet the multiple demands of policy making, domestic affairs, worldwide alliance structures, and membership in international organizations. All contribute to the need for today's officer to supplement traditional military skills and develop a deeper knowledge and wider understanding.

General Eisenhower remarked in a Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense in 1949:

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<sup>1</sup>George Cotton Gilliland, Col., USMC (Ret.), Letter to Editor appearing in Time, February 19, 1965, p. 10.





It is of fundamental importance that the future regular officers of the three services should possess abilities in leadership, and a basic knowledge of the techniques of modern warfare, the development of which traditionally has been among the objectives of the present system. However, in addition they must have many other qualities and talents if they are to provide the wise, balanced, and experienced direction which is required at all levels in the military forces under present-day conditions. They should have a background of general knowledge similar to that possessed by the graduates of our leading universities. They must have a firm grasp of the particular role of a military establishment within the framework of our government in a democratic society. They must be aware of the major problems of the nation which they are dedicated to serve, and understand the relationship between military preparedness and all the other elements which are also part of the fabric of real national security. In this connection they should be conscious of a responsibility toward the national economy upon which the expense of modern defense measures has such a heavy impact, and of the crucial significance in terms of security, of a healthy national economy. Finally, it is particularly important that the officers of the three services be imbued from the outset of their careers with an understanding of the concept of the national military establishments as a single integrated instrument of defense and with the sense of teamwork which must exist among the services if they are to complement each other effectively in carrying out their joint and separate missions in a unified defense structure.<sup>1</sup>

Attempting to categorize the type officer General Eisenhower speaks of, it is relatively simple to look at what has transpired since 1949 and develop a substantial list of "he must be's," when speculating on the type of officer today's system must develop. Such a list might include: he must be imaginative, practical, energetic; he must be observant, untiring, sagacious, esthetic, understanding, crafty; he must be incisive, equanimical, clairvoyant and aggressive. Historically, all these attributes have been detectable in military leaders; therefore, agreement on such a list

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<sup>1</sup>John W. Masland and Lawrence I. Radway, Soldiers and Scholars (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 28, quoting A Report and Recommendations to the Secretary of Defense.





could easily be obtained. The anomaly presented is that these were the requirements for Greek officers in 400 B.C.<sup>1</sup> The identification of needs on this basis, though relatively simple, is far from profound.

The Marine Corps cannot become enthralled with such trite, hackneyed, phraseology depicting tomorrow's needs in yesterday's terminology. An imaginative policy to nurture leadership talent must include not only efforts to identify leadership traits, but a continuous development operation.

In its own best interest, as well as that of its officers, the Marine Corps' never-diminishing goal must be the development of its own leaders who are, in fact, competent leaders. This sort of operation severely tests organizational ingenuity and wisdom. For the major problem in development of leadership talent is to recognize what constitutes that talent.<sup>2</sup> Any organization is likely to get trapped in its own stereotyped notions of what actually constitutes the necessary leadership talent and fail to relate the verbal image to the actual traits producing success. Concomitantly, traits commonly apotheosized and associated with a high level leadership potential are not always such as to make for success, or even happiness in large organizations. Yet, the abilities of these highly intelligent persons capable of high order abstraction, are needed and must be recognized without their particular traits becoming the measure of value for all.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles P. Reeves, Lt. Col., "Officers Desired in 1965" (unpublished student thesis, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1956), p. 15, quoting Socrates.

<sup>2</sup>Prospect For America, A Report prepared by the Rockefeller Panel Reports (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 353.



In addition to recognizing the talent or personal traits necessary to realize our objective of maximum personal development, it is essential that the Marine Corps inspire and motivate officers to the very best that is in them, and to provide them the opportunity to exercise their best capabilities; then these efforts must be objectively documented and used as a basis for advancement. The Marine Corps should learn to regard every misuse of talent as an injustice to the individual officer and to itself.<sup>1</sup> Through the medium of lucid and penetrating appraisal these goals will not suffer diminution.

#### Appraisal in Career Management

Executive development programs of one type or another have been used in American business and government for years. However, the real impetus for training, developing and appraising has developed since World War II. Within the Marine Corps the framework for career management is centered in the Assignment and Classification Branch of the Personnel Department, Headquarters Marine Corps.<sup>2</sup> Here is a great sorting-out machine. One of its most important goals is to guide officers and offer challenges to each in an attempt to develop his capacities to the utmost. This is accomplished through assignments which extend to all types of duty, schooling, and location. Management of the Marine Corps' 18,000 officers is accomplished by twenty staff officers (monitors) situated in the Officer Assignment Section. For example, the staff officer managing ground officers, major and below has

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 380.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Major A. C. Smith, Jr., Ground Officer Monitor, Assignment and Classification Branch, Personnel Department, Headquarters Marine Corps, February 17, 1965.





approximately 3850 officers under his cognizance.<sup>1</sup> Officers are assigned to Marine Corps commands and, in turn, these commands assign officers to various duties within the command where they undergo constant formal and informal training, which molds their behavior and establishes the foundation upon which career development subsists.

The planning and operation of officer career management are clearly defined.<sup>2</sup> The G-1 Division of Headquarters is responsible for all policy matters in the personnel field. In this connection it works closely with field commands and with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy. The Personnel Department is responsible for the operation of the system. Both the Personnel Department and the G-1 Division report directly to the Chief of Staff of the Marine Corps.

Career management policies are simple, direct and widely published, yet activities are formally structured, more bureaucratic, and more administered than in the past. This is one of the side effects of organizational growing pains. One of the characteristics of the dynamic Marine Corps and one of the obstacles to the full development of individual talents is the complexity of implementing those policies. While the complex organization is possibly necessary, it is also costly. Though the policies are simple and direct, the implementation is often a stifling atmosphere for the exercise of individual creativity and induces a conformity that becomes a real threat to organizational vitality. Complexity clouds simple objectives, the efforts encouraged tend to be clustered around average acceptability. The pace of the individual's progress becomes closeted in the routine, where he must conform to the traffic patterns which are rigidly fixed for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Headquarters Manual, "Officer Plans Branch," Chapter 2, part C, paragraph 2100, and "Assignment and Classification," Chapter 7, part 10, paragraph 7150.





the ruck. Though they elude a cooperative program of career development, only the goals defined are lofty, the results often mere competence.

Mitigated by these impinging forces, which are personal evaluations of the environment—not documented dysfunctions—the following broad policies are perceivable:

- a. Provide a highly skilled officers corps in peacetime to operate the Marine Corps at peak efficiency; capable at any time to meet "force" in "readiness" requirements.
- b. Develop highly competent officers qualified to serve most effectively and to form the flexible nucleus for rapid expansion in the event of future war or national emergency.
- c. Provide all career officers an equal opportunity to learn those skills necessary for promotion and higher responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

Policies are implemented through a program consisting primarily of informal on-the-job training, augmented by formal school training, with the avowed intent to eliminate repetitious assignments to insure greater opportunity for officers to gain broad command and staff experience.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these stated policies, the philosophy prevailing within the Marine Corps is that each regular officer is essentially an infantryman and only secondarily a specialist in one of the supporting staff areas. The Marine Corps Manual states:

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<sup>1</sup>Howard E. Porter, Lt. Col., U.S.A., "An Analysis and Appraisal of Officer Career Management in the Armed Forces" (unpublished student thesis, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington, D.C., 1957), pp. 68-69.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Manual, "Assignment and Distribution Policy," Chapter 1, paragraph 1301.2.



Each officer is recognized as having a field of command specialization, on the basis of which fleet marine force assignments will be made. This field will be identified by the officer's primary military occupational specialty. Ground officers qualified by experience or training to command artillery, tank and amphibian tractor, motor transport, signal and engineering units will be so identified by their primary military occupational specialty. Other ground officers will be similarly identified as infantry unit commanders.<sup>1</sup>

To accomplish the objectives and policies of the career management system, four basic ingredients are used: rotation of duty assignments, selection for schooling, promotion, and performance history. The cohesive that provides for the emulsifying of these ingredients into a career development program is the career appraisal system. The career management system attempts to maintain organizational viability and homeostasis through an open loop system with policy and objective inputs originating at one extreme, and feedback in the form of individual performance appraisal stemming from the other extreme. It is a continuous struggle between rather static organizational dictates and dynamic personal needs and wants, with the appraisal system assuming the role of the devil's advocate. Each of the ingredients contributes an important role in accomplishing career management goals.<sup>2</sup>

#### Rotation of duty assignments

The comprehensive career pattern outline (Figure 8, page 105) governs a structured program of rotating duty assignments. However, the

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Manual, "Assignment and Reassignment: Personnel and General Administration," Vol. 1, Pt. B, paragraph 7062.

<sup>2</sup>Interview, Smith.



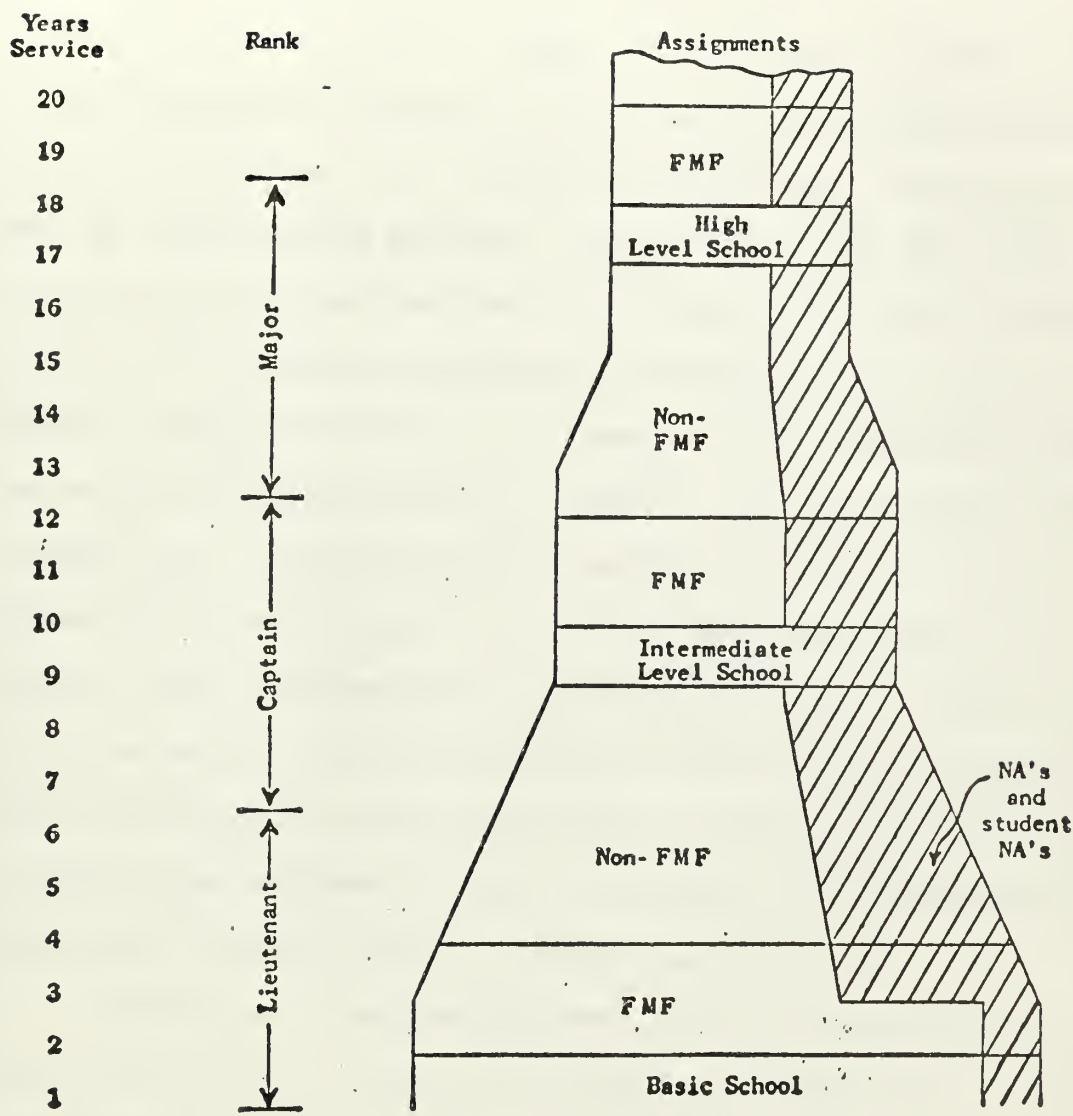


Fig. 8.--General Marine Corps assignment pattern for officers.<sup>a</sup>

a. Source: Marine Corps Manual, Chapter 1.





system is highly personalized in the sense that the Marine Corps allows each officer to reflect his choice of duty assignment on section A of the appraisal instrument (Figure 5, pages 38 - 39). Upon receipt of the appraisal instrument at headquarters, information on duty preference is extracted and provided to the reported-on subordinate's monitor in the Assignment and Classification Section.<sup>1</sup> However, to say this approach is personalized is not to say that the officer has primary control over his own career, via the appraisal instrument; but every attempt is made by the monitor to satisfy the officer's preference, consistent with the needs of the Marine Corps and economy. For example, of the 358 infantry majors reassigned in FY 1965, approximately one-fifth received their first preference and one-fourth their second.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that a substantial part of the monitor's task is to insure that the individual officer is exposed to sufficient variety and challenge during his career to assure that he not be placed too early on an inflexible schedule of duty assignments, and to accomplish this assignment program in consonance with interpersonal considerations structured into the appraisal instrument.

Performance of duty as indicated by the reporting senior's completion of sections B, C, and D of the appraisal instrument does not appear to be considered in the assignment of duty, except in cases where specific requirements are indicated or flagrant lack of ability reported. However, implicit in the rotation authority is the substantial task of insuring that the career officer is exposed to a content of values in which high performance is encouraged.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



### Selection for schooling

One extremely important ingredient of career management is the active schooling program; but formal education offers only part of the meaningful education that goes on in the Marine Corps. Less widely recognized are the out-of-school, informal influences which affect the emotions and academic fitness of the career officer and motivate him to complete formal periods of instruction. The Marine Corps operates a very extensive school program; in addition, it takes advantage of other service schools and civilian education programs. Figure 8, page 105, projects one intermediate level school and one top-level school during a twenty-year career.<sup>1</sup> Equality of education usually dictates that an officer shall begin his career with basic school as his first assignment, an intermediate level school at nine to ten years of service, and a top-level school at seventeen to eighteen years of service.<sup>2</sup> The career management problem is not whether the officer will go to school, but rather which of several schools will he attend?

Officers' preferences and/or reporting seniors' recommendations on the appraisal instrument usually determine the school to be attended; however, some officers are arbitrarily assigned to schools under the philosophy that education of everyone up to the level of his ability and the demand for excellence are compatible. Selection for postgraduate schools and top-level schools is made by a board which has at its disposal all appraisal reports

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Personnel Manual, "Assignment and Distribution of Commissioned Officers," May 12, 1964, Chapter 4, part B, paragraph 4052.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



filed during the career of the officers being considered.<sup>1</sup> The subjective and judgmental shortcomings of the appraisal report, previously discussed, cannot help but cloud this crucially decisive juncture in the officer's career. The integrity of the appraisal system can be judged from the results of these selections.

By insisting that equality means an exactly similar exposure to education—regardless of variations in interest, potential and capacity of the officer—and in acknowledgment of the importance of developing the traits necessary for effective leadership, the Marine Corps maintains a program for attainment of a college degree by career officers. A select number of officers is sent each year to a college or university of the officer's choice to complete not more than the final two semesters toward the awarding of a baccalaureate degree.<sup>2</sup> These officers—and their number over the past few years is considerable—benefit from the hysteria, fatuously associated with the receipt of the college degree as an accolade of merit, not as a symbol of academic excellence. The real contribution to the career development objectives is highly debatable.

#### Promotion.

Contributing saliently to the planned development of Marine Officers are promotions. The basic authority for promotion of Marine Corps officers is contained in the statutes of the United States as codified in Title 10, U. S. Code.<sup>3</sup> Promotions are recommended by a selection board

<sup>1</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Manual, "Officer Training," Chapter 1, paragraph 1520.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, "College Degree Program," Marine Corps Order 1560.7, March 5, 1957.

<sup>3</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Manual, "Officer Promotion," Chapter 1, paragraph 1420.





which reviews official records and appraisal history to determine "best qualified for promotion," and are approved by the Secretary of the Navy.

The best qualified may vary from ninety-nine per cent of one group, at the lower ranks to only ten per cent of the group at higher ranks.<sup>1</sup> The best qualified provision constitutes a sometimes arbitrary weeding-out process by which the hierarchy is perpetuated. The focal point of the promotion decision, at the lower ranks at least, is the career appraisal instrument which may or may not be as arbitrarily based as the selection process—thus "best qualified for promotion" amounts to arbitrary interpretations of arbitrary opinions which have been formalized in a structured instrument.

There is overwhelming evidence of a determination on the part of the Marine Corps that the weeding-out process be executed mercifully and generously, rather than ruthlessly, rigidly, or mechanically. Often, rather than assess a true disparage in ability, mediocrity is accepted. And just as often ability is so inscrutably appraised in subjective colloquialisms that assessment is quite impossible. The progressive decrease of numbers of officers in successively higher ranks, when the Marine Corps is at relatively stable strengths, inevitably prevents the promotion of many well-qualified officers.<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, nonselection is often only remotely associated with the appraised past ability of the individual, good, bad, or indifferent, yet all are considered at the end of their effective service.

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<sup>1</sup>Ad Hoc Committee to Study and Revise the Officer Personnel Act of 1947, A Concept of Career Management for Officer Personnel of the Armed Services, A Report and Recommendation for the Secretary of Defense (December 1960), pp. 49-51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 35.



Career planning and officer promotion, conceptually, fit well. However, there are arbitrary requirements imposed either by law or policy which must be satisfied as a prerequisite for promotion. Statutory controls have been imposed on the promotion system in the form of:

- (a) the number of officers in various grades,
- (b) the point at which officers may be separated involuntarily,
- (c) the selection methods and length of qualifying service.<sup>1</sup>

The elements of the promotion system, in contrast with specific promotion criteria, consider these factors:

- (a) The period of service considered necessary to prepare officers for advancement to each rank and to permit judicious appraisal of potential for promotion to higher grades in which the official appraisals of past performance are of major importance.
- (b) The equitable blend of promotion opportunity and liability for separation which will insure a vital officer corps and at the same time attract ambitious young men as career prospects.
- (c) A general necessity for general confidence in the selection process by all concerned.<sup>2</sup>

The Defense Department's Ad Hoc Committee on Study and Revision of the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 has recommended a uniform service promotion policy which would adhere to a structured distribution of time in grade

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-27.



requirements for all ranks (Figure 9, page 112).<sup>1</sup> All officers are provided an equal opportunity for promotion within the rank time phase indicated. From this distribution one point is abundantly clear—although the appraisal system was heralded fifty years ago as substituting best qualified for the rigid seniority system then existing, the promotion system is still substantially based upon the queuing principle; the present system ignores accelerated promotion for those with exceptional ability and considers best qualified only after seniority principles have been adhered to.<sup>2</sup>

### Performance history

Forming the fourth and most volatile ingredient of the career management system, and in many ways the only means by which the individual officer is linked to the career management system, is performance history. The identification of ability pivots on the strength and weakness of the appraisal system mutually reaching a climax, and manifesting influences on career patterns. The input provided by the appraisal system, regardless of the degree of objectivity that produced the information, is vital to the effective patternization of all the career management ingredients discussed. When large numbers are involved, appraisal is the only orderly way to uncover potential leaders who would otherwise go unnoticed. Without appraisal information, the system would be required to function by dictate and random chance.

The role of the appraisal system in establishing the individual performance history should not be under-emphasized. The most intricate

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-41.





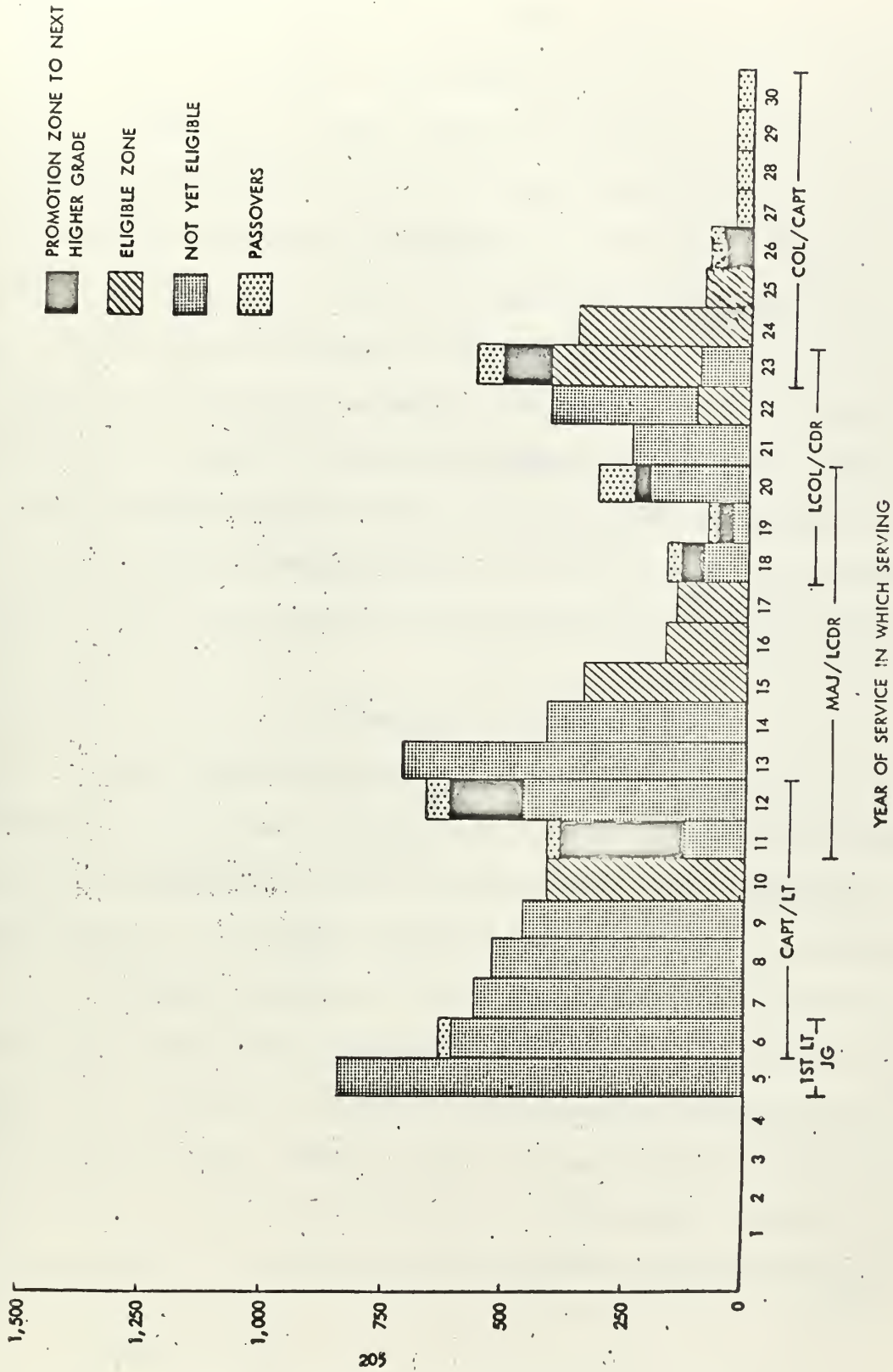


Fig. 9.--Marine Corps projected Time and Grade Distribution July 1965.<sup>a</sup>  
 a. Source: The Ad Hoc Committee to Study and Revise the Officer Personnel Act of 1947.



ramifications result from two necessities, beyond those of day-to-day operations, which are peculiar to the Marine Corps environment: (1) for the most part, the Marine Corps must develop its leadership at middle and top levels from officers entering the Corps at the lowest officer grade, there being no civilian occupational counterparts to career Marine Officers, and (2) the officers corps must be capable of adapting to sudden emergencies and irregular fluctuations in strength.<sup>1</sup> Appraisal must equate these factors to the objectives of the career management system in a way that is peculiar to the Marine Corps' needs for actual and expandable leaderships. Therefore, the career development program viable under performance history criteria is as much the product of imposed necessity as it is a tool of effective management. Such a system would seriously falter in a differing environment.

#### A Comparative Appraisal System

Career development programs do not all parallel that of the Marine Corps, in which career development is a bilateral participative process subject to interchanging static and dynamic needs, and conforming to statutory requirements. For example, the Chase Manhattan Bank is an organization the career management objectives of which are unilaterally predicated on the conscious efforts of the individual bank officer to improve his job performance and to prepare for increased responsibilities through his own volition.<sup>2</sup> The appraisal system employed by the bank is tailored to operate as a counseling device, and only secondarily as a promotional validation input device. In the opinion of bank officials, the appraisal instrument (Figure 10,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Chase Manhattan Bank, Management Development Division pamphlet.



pages 115 - 116) supports those career development objectives admirably.<sup>1</sup> Appraisal reporting is semantically uncomplicated, with the reporting official reflecting his evaluative judgments on three facts: the subordinate's present responsibilities, his performance of those responsibilities, and his potential for promotion and additional responsibilities.<sup>2</sup>

The first requirement of the appraisal report is a brief outline of the basic functions or responsibilities against which appraisal of performance is being considered. Next, the reporting senior makes an objective analysis and appraisal of how the present functions and responsibilities are being fulfilled and identifies strengths, weaknesses, and actions required to improve performance. Finally, the objective opinion and appraisal of potential for advancement to the next higher level of management, with suggestions for alternate avenues of advancement are summarized. The official reporting then must make separate overall performance and potential appraisal from a fixed set of descriptive words (Figure 11, page 117). This becomes the basis for the management inventory which is charted (Figure 12, page 118) and perpetually maintained in the management planning department.<sup>3</sup> Promotions are made on the basis of the reporting official's recommendation at the time a vacancy occurs, not upon a record of past appraisal forms; although there is nothing to preclude the reporting official's examination of either past appraisal forms or the management development inventory prior to recommendation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Alfred R. Worster, Vice President, Management Development Office, Chase Manhattan Bank, November 17, 1964.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.





NAME

TITLE

AGE

Trust

Personal Trust &amp; Estates Division 115

DEPARTMENT

DIVISION OR BRANCH

PRESENT RESPONSIBILITIES

(Brief outline of basic functions or responsibilities against which to consider performance; indicate years on present assignment.)

Administers assigned accounts for which CMB is acting as executor or administrator, voluntary or testamentary trustee, escrow agent, guardian or committee of an incompetent; develops or assists in the development of new business from existing accounts and from other sources. 5 years on present assignment. Provides general management supervision to the legal section of the Division.

PERFORMANCE

(Objective analysis and appraisal of how present functions or responsibilities are performed; identify strengths and weaknesses and action to improve performance.)

Paul is an able administrator who uses his legal training to advantage in examining proposed wills and trust agreements. His legal talent has been applied in many special problem cases, and he has been very effective in suggesting solutions. He is an efficient, well-organized worker, who readily accepts responsibility although he does not necessarily appear to seek it. This is probably due to his easy-going nature, which makes him very popular with his co-workers and subordinates.

Our last appraisal of Paul indicated a need to improve in the general area of written communication where we felt he was somewhat lengthy and perhaps too formal. This was discussed with him and it was agreed that he would attend our Better Letters program. As a result he has dropped the use of stuffy cliches and his letters now have a friendlier, warmer approach.

In the area of general management, Paul continues to do an extremely effective job. However, if he is to move on to positions carrying greater managerial responsibilities he will have to improve somewhat in his approach to costs. To sharpen his focus on this important aspect of the managerial end of his job we are asking him to act as our liaison officer with the Controller's Department, which will require him to analyze, and make monthly report to me, on the cost picture for this Division.

SPECIMEN

1. Please indicate whether the above appraisal of performance was discussed with the officer: YES (X) NO ( ) Date June 15, 196
2. Please circle the word(s) most nearly describing your over-all opinion of the officer's performance on his present assignment:

SUPERIOR

MEETS POSITION REQUIREMENTS

EXCEEDS POSITION REQUIREMENTS

IMPROVEMENT NECESSARY



(Objective opinion and analysis of potential for advancement to next higher level of management and to higher management levels, indicating possible alternative avenues. Consider past performance, capacity and willingness to handle greater responsibilities, personal goals, intellectual capacity, and other pertinent personal circumstances. 116 If promotable, estimate when ready for next advancement and indicate what is being done to broaden capacity.)

As indicated under "Performance" Paul is technically competent in the administration of his accounts, but some improvement is desirable in his approach to costs. Should his attitude improve in this direction, I believe he could do an effective job at the next management level.

I have no doubt about his ability, and I believe his potential is clear; however, some work must be done to develop him to his maximum effectiveness.

Ned Henry is 59 and will be retiring in six years. Our objective is to get Paul ready to step into that slot, moving first to the Assistant Vice President level to replace Jim Jackson who has indicated his intention to retire next year.

In addition to the exposure to the Controller's Department, we are making Paul a member of the Trust Investment Committee in order to broaden his background, and expose him further to the Investment field.

For Bankwide planning purposes, please circle the word most nearly describing your over-all opinion as to potential for advancement:

OUTSTANDING Qualifications for advancing to Executive Vice President level.

CONSIDERABLE Clear potential to advance one level and perhaps higher.

SOME Potential to handle expanded responsibilities at present level and perhaps advance one level.

LIMITED At or near capacity in present position; or limited due to personal factors.





ORGANIZATION UNIT → METROPOLITAN DEPARTMENT

NAME AND TITLE OF INCUMBENT → JOHN Q. EXAMPLE, AVP

AGE/SERVICE → 52/23

PERFORMANCE → ☐

POTENTIAL → ☐

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SUPERIOR	<input checked="" type="radio"/> OUTSTANDING (Qualifications for advancing to high level position.)
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCEEDS POSITION REQUIREMENTS	<input type="radio"/> CONSIDERABLE (Clear potential to advance one level and perhaps higher.)
<input type="checkbox"/> MEETS POSITION REQUIREMENTS	<input type="radio"/> SOME (Potential to handle expanded responsibilities at present level and perhaps advance one level.)
<input type="checkbox"/> IMPROVEMENT NECESSARY	<input type="radio"/> LIMITED (At or near capacity in present position; or limited due to personal factors.)

Fig. 11.--Chase Manhattan Bank's overall appraisal categories prepared for management inventory purposes only.





POSITION NAME AND TITLE	AGE	READINESS	LOCATION
<u>DEPARTMENT HEAD</u>			
<u>EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT</u>			
M.A. Baad, VP	57	In emergency	Personal Trust
R.H. Gordon, VP	39	Needs considerable development	" "
W.S. Howe, VP	54	" "	" "
C.F. Farran, PTO	32	Long range	" "
<u>DIVISION HEAD</u>			
<u>PERSONAL TRUST &amp; ESTATES</u>			
R.H. Gordon, VP	39	With additional experience	Pers. Trust & Estates
W.S. Howe, VP	54	Ready now	" " " "
J. vonSoosten, VP	56	In emergency	" " " "
C.F. Farran, PTO	32	Long range	" " " "
<u>GROUP HEAD</u>			
<u>PERSONAL TRUST &amp; ESTATES</u>			
W.D. Griffith, AVP	42	Ready now	Pers. Trust & Estates
J.W. Ream, AVP	53	With continued improvement	" " " "
P.A. Agnew, PTO	39	With further development	" " " "
E.M. Enright, PTO	38	Needs considerable development	" " " "
C.F. Farran, PTO	32	" " "	" " " "
R.H. Keel, PTO	38	" " "	" " " "
A.E. Mack, PTO	30	Long range	" " " "
T.S. Martin, PTO	40	Needs considerable development	" " " "
D.A. Pierce, PTO	54	With continued improvement	" " " "
<u>GROUP HEAD</u>			
<u>ESTATE PLANNING</u>			
B.T. Iverson, AVP	54	Ready now	Pers. Trust & Estates
W.G. Hoffmann, EPO	47	With improved understanding of management responsibility	" " " "

Fig. 12.--Chase Manhattan Bank management planning inventory.



Both career management systems (Chase Manhattan Bank's and the Marine Corps') have as their goals similar aspirations. That is, the advancement of the best men to positions of leadership in the organizational hierarchy. Organizational purposes are not even remotely related, yet the success of each purpose is tenuously based on the ability to identify and develop tomorrow's leadership concomitantly with accomplishing today's needs. Which approach to appraisal is more successful? An accurate measure seems impossible, but several parallels may be drawn.

Career appraisal at Chase Manhattan Bank has not suffered the discrediting inflation of ratings experienced by the Marine Corps, simply because they are used primarily for counseling.<sup>1</sup> At Chase the reporting official has to live with the recommendation he makes and the people he promotes, adding an air of rationality to his appraisal. The "feedback" of appraisal data allows the subordinate to adjust his performance of duty before the critical point of nonpromotion is reached. In the Marine Corps environment the reporting senior can be more flippant, because he is required to live with his appraisals and the resultant promotions for only short periods of time before reassignment moves either the reporting senior or the subordinate. Feedback in the Marine Corps system usually is in the form of retrospection after nonselection for promotion, and even then the subordinate may not be counseled relative to the reasons for the nonselection. Chase recognizes that different individuals have different potentials and it does not hold the same size carrot in front of everyone's nose. Excellent performance at one level does not necessarily mean potential for advancement to another level. Everyone at Chase is not competing in a marathon for the chairman of the board's job; they know it and, consequently,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



concentrate on the business at hand. The Marine Corps has the philosophy that all career officers are being developed for the very top echelon; consequently, about ninety per cent of the career officers think that is where they are headed. Finally, Chase Manhattan Bank's appraisal instrument fulfills a basic appraisal requirement, being tailored to answer the objectives and policies of the management planning system to provide primarily a counseling device, not an historical record.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Whisler concluded from the study of a number of appraisal systems certain prerequisites under which the appraisal system adequately complements the overall career development program. Chase scores high in fulfilling Mr. Whisler's requirements that:

- a. The appraisal technique must be matched with the objectives sought.
- b. Appraisal should be treated as an integral part of the organization's activity.
- c. Appraisal should be an economical activity.
- d. The best system emphasizes the development of performance standards and base appraisal upon achievement and effort towards achievement.<sup>2</sup>

It is entirely possible to have an apparently effective system of appraisal, one that has provided adequate results, well accepted, and yet be poorly adapted to the objectives of the career management system.<sup>3</sup> For example, the basic objective of the Chase appraisal program is to provide a medium for counseling the individual so that the individual can make a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., and Whisler and Harper, (eds.), p. 435.

<sup>2</sup>Whisler and Harper (eds.), pp. 435-437.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 436.





conscious effort to improve his performance and/or potential for growth.<sup>1</sup> The open-end essay report used is ideal to meet this objective. If the objective was to provide validating information for a selection process, this well-functioning and effective appraisal system would very likely fall on its face.<sup>2</sup>

Now, keeping Chase in mind, let us look at the situation in the Marine Corps: It adopted the modified graphic scale appraisal instrument years ago with apparent dual career management objectives: (1) validation of selection proceedings, and (2) counseling and guidance purposes. This hypothesis cannot be supported by documented records; however, the appraisal methodology that existed until 1959 called for the subordinate to review and sign his report, indicating the appraisal was at least partly intended to provide counseling "feedback." The modified graphic scale worked reasonably well, considering dual objectives were being served. Objectives of the system were realigned in 1959 when the subordinate ceased reviewing his form, and the sole objective, ostensibly, became that of providing unskewed appraisal information for selection and promotion validation.<sup>3</sup> The appraisal format, however, remains the same—a modification that would better facilitate the new unilateral objective (i.e., either the forced-choice, or forced-distribution method) has not been adopted. Thus comparison of appraisal compatibility with career management objectives opens the door to the original unresolved question; the Chase Manhattan Bank has apparently balanced objectives and system, but the Marine Corps has modified

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<sup>1</sup>Chase Manhattan Bank, Management Development Division pamphlet.

<sup>2</sup>Whisler and Harper, p. 436.

<sup>3</sup>U. S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Personnel Manual, "Fitness Reports for Officers and Noncommissioned Officers," Chapter XV, paragraph 15068.



objectives without a commensurate tailoring of the appraisal instrument to the new objectives. Whisler considers this a violation of career management and appraisal relationship.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of the questionable relative ability of the appraisal instrument to functionally balance objectives and methodology, a much deeper concern is perceivable. The identification of promotable or talented individuals by any appraisal system should be no more than the first step by which the overall career management system is influenced. It should be only part of a strong guidance program built within a content of values. Appraisal is not just a mechanical process for one-way communication of information or periodic validation of promotion; it must spring from the deep-rooted convictions and participation of both the implementers and the practitioners. The objectives of the guidance should be to stimulate the individual rather than the group to make the most of his potentialities. The Rockefeller Panel Reports warned of the atmosphere of collaborative efforts which loses sight of the individual.

It is not intended to intimate that the management system is the only factor in the development of Marine Officers or bank officials. The tendency to let the system be the major contributor to development is to sacrifice the individual to the system.<sup>2</sup> The career management system is the guiding factor not the sole criterion. As is the case under the Chase system, a primary role must be assumed by the individual. The career management plan can easily become dichotomized by its own conflicting influences; however, the individual monitoring his own progress can identify intelligent objectives and direct development towards them by:

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<sup>1</sup>Whisler and Harper (eds.), pp. 435-437.

<sup>2</sup>U. D. Schoeller, "Set Standards for Your Own Performance," Management Review, June, 1964, pp. 67-68.





- (a) Attaining the ability to learn, cope with problems and think.
- (b) Better understanding of people, not just in their static organizational roles, but in their informal, dynamic environments.
- (c) Developing abilities of self-expression and the related ability to listen.
- (d) Orienting thinking, relationship and expression toward the future.

But while the strength of cooperative effort is impressive, there is danger that we may misunderstand the true source of that strength. The danger is that we may forget the individual behind the façade of huge and impersonal institutions. The risk is that we will glorify science and forget the scientists; magnify government and ignore the men and women who discharge its functions; pin our hopes on education, business or cultural institutions, and lose sight of the fact that these institutions are no more creative or purposeful than the individuals who endow them with creativity and purpose.

Beyond the temptation to overlook the individual, there is another danger. This is the difficulty of giving free expression to creativity within an institutional atmosphere. We face the threat that our increasingly organized efforts will become increasingly routine; that the structures of science, government, and enterprise will become hard shells resistant to growth and change, rather than flexible institutions capable of renewing and recreating themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Paradoxically, in light of the Panel's insight and the comparison of the Chase and Marine Corps appraisal systems there might be an indication that the Marine Corps must come to the aid of the individual—finding ways to identify him as a unique person, and to place him alongside his fellow officers in a way that will not inhibit or destroy his individuality.

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<sup>1</sup>Rockefeller Panel, p. 337.





### Appraisal Ramifications for Tomorrow

Career management, with the emulsifying influence of appraisal upon ingredients of promotion, assignment, schooling, and performance history provides the foundation to shape the Marine Corps leaders of tomorrow. Although questions have been forwarded as to how effectively this is being accomplished by the established system of appraisal, an end product is acknowledged. What type of individual is this combination of administrative elements likely to produce? What should be the prototype of tomorrow's leaders?

Leavitt and Whisler in their article, "Management in the 1980's," envisioned an entirely new environment for the business world of the 1980's.<sup>1</sup> One which would require a new type of leader, who already is well beyond the academic stage and filtering into management positions. Leavitt and Whisler's special prototype manager is one of the elite few who will be able to communicate with the cybernetic world around him. If such a radical change in the business leadership is legitimate speculation, and this article has been substantiated by other writers,<sup>2</sup> what ramifications can be postulated for the Marine Corps? Ten or fifteen years from now the needs will be ex post facto knowledge; but the individual who must fulfill those needs has already been solicited from today's society and has become the charge of today's career management system. What role will the appraisal

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<sup>1</sup>Leavitt and Whisler, "Management in the 1980's," Harvard Business Review, November-December, 1958, pp. 41-42.

<sup>2</sup>Norbert Wiener, Some Moral and Technical Consequences of Automation, ed. Morris Philipson (18 Chapters; New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 162; Donald N. Michael, "Cybernation: The Silent Conquest," Chapter 3 of Automation, ed. Morris Philipson (18 chapters; New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 78.



system play in his development? How can it complement an aggressive career-planning program and insure that the individual needed will evolve, or are we dealing with a recondite dimension that only time will clarify?

Lt. Colonel Charles P. Reeves, in an interesting study conducted at the Army War College, researched the personal traits of six of American history's top leaders—Washington, Lee, Grant, Pershing, Marshall, and Eisenhower.<sup>1</sup> It would be edifying to make a composite of the personal traits which made these men great and then attempt to construct empirically the parameters for future leaders, based on historical fact.

Following the procedure recommended, this list of characteristics or personal traits would be manifested: physique, personality, judgment, decisiveness, determination, initiative, industriousness, courage, and disciplinarian.<sup>2</sup> Garnish this selection of traits with several of the significant leadership trends observed during the 60's such as speaking and listening ability, and advanced education; then hypothetical parameters for the career management system can be constructed to develop these traits through an integrated program of schooling, assignments, promotion and appraisal. The appraisal instrument would be weighted in favor of these specifics, and progress governed by a steady diet of excellence in physical personality, judgment, decisiveness, determination, initiative, industriousness, courage, and disciplinarian traits. Extrapolating from the results of today's appraisal system it would be safe to predict that the 1980's would produce copious characterizations of Washingtons, Lees, Grants, Pershings, Marshalls, and Eisenhowers.

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<sup>1</sup>Reeves, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.



The question we want to address ourselves to and the one which will saliently affect tomorrow is whether we have singled out the proper criteria for development and measurement of tomorrow's leaders, and whether subjective evaluation by today's generation of reporting seniors is compatible with future needs.<sup>1</sup> With all due respect to these great men of the past, other considerations may become paramount. The combination of past history and subjectivity might be dangerous.

The increased speeds, reduced time and space factors, destructiveness of weaponry and burgeoning technological developments have implications for tomorrow's career management that cannot be coped with by emulating the best traits of past leaders. As Leavitt and Whisler's 1980 manager would require a substantial departure—a hybrid abstraction of today's manager—so also our future military leaders—the products of today's promotions, schools, assignments, and appraisals—must develop personal traits and characteristics that are compatible with today's military environment, yet forward looking.

A high sense of morals will assume a predominate position of importance among tomorrow's personal traits. The ability to weigh gains against losses, not only in a military sense but from the economic, political and social aspects, will be mandatory.<sup>2</sup> The increased tempo and shorter reaction times of tomorrow escalate speed, accuracy and incisiveness of thought, and related action for each officer. Technological innovations will influence every aspect of tomorrow's command and we must not forget

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<sup>1</sup>E. E. Chiselli, "Validity of Management Traits in Relation to Occupational Level," Personnel Psychology, Summer 1963, pp. 109-111; S. Hobbe, "Personnel Growth Through Performance Appraisal," Management Review, July-August 1962, pp. 14-18.

<sup>2</sup>Reeves, p. 17.





that these advances have been paralleled by an increased complexity of the organization. Although an officer cannot be expected to master all the technicalities, he must have the inbred ingredients to understand them, operate and control them, and appreciate their capabilities and limitations. In short, time will not allow the luxury of specialization for tomorrow's leader, he must be an individual who assimilates many areas of knowledge, assuring that he is not a "trench warfare specialist" in the age of laser rays and cybernetic command. The trend toward specialization has created among other things, an extraordinary demand for gifted generalists—officers with enough intellectual and technical competence to deal with the specialist and enough breadth to display more versatility than was ever demanded of his forerunners. Such individuals will be drawn increasingly from the ranks of those whose education, experience and developed traits have included both depth and breadth—those who have specialized but have not allowed themselves to be trapped by their specialty.<sup>1</sup>

The international or global basis of our military commitment, closely allied with other nations, requires that future military leaders possess sensitivity to the ethnic, social and interpersonal implications of their role.<sup>2</sup> Any future war (other than limited local action) will not be fought on a battlefield by military alone, but rather in the cities by military and civilian side-by-side. The future military leader will be required to work and understand civilian leaders and people in general—the battlefield or military installation can no longer be the haven through which military

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Stromsem, Ph. D., The George Washington University, Washington, D. C., Lecture, November 12, 1964; J. C. W. Schaie, "How to Conduct an Executive Search," Financial Executive, June 1964, pp. 13-15.

<sup>2</sup>Reeves, p. 17.



leaders escape these responsibilities.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the future military leader will be preoccupied with economy. He must develop the traits necessary to squeeze the most efficiency out of every dollar.<sup>2</sup>

Carefully reviewing these considerations there is no mention of the historical attributes which predominated in Washington, Lee, Grant, Pershing, Marshall, or Eisenhower. Does this mean that these traits are now out-dated and no longer important measures of the leader? The answer is a resounding "No!" These traits have become inbred, implicit in the consideration of future leaders; the abbreviated list is a necessary consideration beyond the historical perspective. This is by no means offered as an all-encompassing list of considerations necessary for tomorrow's leaders; rather it is inclusive enough to impung the system by which we are evolving toward this state of affairs.

The avowed career management philosophy previously examined in detail can develop the needed officers only if the methods of appraisal and development are pervious to those needs. The appraisal system is the means by which that perviousness must be developed. If the system has a historical perspective, based on reporting past accomplishments, measured by anachronous standards and subjective judgments, furtively withheld from the individual, proper development for tomorrow's role will be left to chance.

The Marine Corps should depend on achievement at many levels. The need is for an unprecedented degree of individual effort and accomplishment. In this context it becomes clear that the achievement of objectives with respect to the development of human resources is almost synonymous

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 17.



with the ability of each level of command to grasp an objective view toward appraisal and disbar the cult of wholly inadequate, subjective judgments.

Reporting seniors are humans with human frailties; therefore, under the present system of appraisal the future military leader is being developed on the basis of the reporting senior's biases of human values, prejudices, image, or historical knowledge, rather than from an objective view of tomorrow's needs. That objective view is obscured because the Marine Corps is content to promote, assign, school, and appraise on the basis of excellence in traits demonstrably important in the past but questionable for tomorrow, and on assessment of those traits by methods which are only remotely subject to constraints which would create a degree of comparability. This situation is not the creature of fiction or chance; it is a situation that has been challenged before.

Colonel Thomas M. Coles, in a letter to the Commandant, points up the enigma created by this situation:

A recent Limited Duty and Permanent Warrant Officer Selection Board, of which I was a member, reviewed the fitness reports of more than ten (10) thousand officers and enlisted Marines. This review re-emphasized the inadequacy of the present fitness report, as a basis for comparison of individuals being considered for promotion or selection.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Cole's letter indicates that the objectives of the career management system are further obscured by a lack of criteria to select which, among the future military leaders, is best qualified by any standard, whether historically or future-oriented. One characteristic of the dynamic Marine

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Lt. Col. Thomas M. Coles, U.S.M.C., to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina, July 25, 1956.





Corps is that its frontiers are constantly changing. A Sam Brown belt worn over today's greens would be ludicrous. Likewise a philosophy toward the type of leader required for tomorrow demands receptivity to change. To rest on achievements is a denial of the future and an invitation to stagnation.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has delved into the role of appraisal as an integral part of the career management system, tracing appraisal from its inception to practice today. Several shortcomings have been identified which have their foundation in both common appraisal deficiencies and particular Marine Corps applications. Answers were sought to the following questions:

1. How has appraisal evolved within the environment of the Marine Corps?
2. What deficiencies are apparent in the present system?
3. What are the broader perspectives of appraisal?

In seeking to explore and analyze these questions, nothing particularly new or startling has been uncovered. Still the fact of the matter is that the implications of these problems have been ignored by the static organizational approach to appraisal practiced by the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps recognizes the importance of career management in order to effectively establish and develop a professional cadre of commissioned officers; however, the central role played by the appraisal system in career management has been clouded by pertinacious clinging to traditional approaches to appraisal. Basically such a situation is untenable for the organization is only as effective as the men who direct it; their



identification should not be obscured. Nevertheless, little change in appraisal philosophy has been instituted to keep pace with the burgeoning new frontiers faced by today's officers. Today's appraisal methodology and philosophy are simple modifications of a post-World War I appraisal system.

Under the Marine Corps' traditional approach to appraisal, the immediate superior (reporting senior) is the best qualified, from the standpoint of hierarchial position to effect formal appraisal of subordinates' performance of duty. However, there are limiting factors which attenuate the effective accomplishment of appraisal—personal bias, judgmental ability, self-emulation, desires, etc. Additional problems have been compounded by the failure of higher authority to establish clearly defined objectives, semantically definable implementation instructions, or explicit standards which would guide the reporting senior through the maze of subjective appraisal decisions required. The rational requirement for comparability has been surrendered to personal evaluative judgments, resulting in many personal inequities and a serious inflation of appraisal ratings.

Communication of appraisal results as "feedback" to higher headquarters functions smoothly, but there is considerable doubt if the number of appraisal reports actually generated are necessary, based upon the total number of reports already on file and the limited amount of time allotted to each individual's appraisal history by promotion or selection boards. Communication of appraisal results to the individual being appraised through some form of counseling technique is not formally sanctioned. Encouragement of counseling techniques to provide the individual officer with "feedback" relative to his performance of duty has not been revealed by this study. On the contrary, the provision for showing the appraisal instrument





to the subordinate upon completion has been modified, in the hope of inducing the reporting senior to use less tainted appraisal judgments, further ostracizing the subordinate from the results of the appraisal.

The system of appraisal evaluation is an integral part of the broader career development, promotion, and management systems, and contributes substantially to the effectiveness of these systems. Career management using the ingredients of appraisal, promotion, assignment and schooling carries the primary responsibility for the development of the future leaders needed to assume important hierarchial positions in the Marine Corps. The leaders required for the future should not be progeny of the evolution of chance but should be developed through the effective organizational use of the ingredients of career management and the conscious effort of the individual to qualify himself by understanding future needs.

Intelligent management, planning, development, and utilization of human resources dictate that officers be systematically, objectively, validly, regularly, and incisively appraised. The information collected by the appraisal system should be free of biased personal judgments, historically oriented domination, and other common appraisal deficiencies so that it can more effectively meet the requirements of effective career management and development.

In the appraisal of individuals the system depends on the judgments of reporting seniors who are not highly or specifically trained to make the difficult appraisal of man himself. The appraisal can be supported to only a limited extent by the appraisal instrument. Ability, judgment and sincerity of the reporting senior are primary determinates of the validity of the appraisal, and the reporting senior's sincere approach to the appraisal



task can be improved if he has confidence in the methodology and philosophy of appraisal. His judgments can be only aided by a well-designed appraisal instrument, not usurped by it.

Appraisal should be based primarily on job performance and results which are measured by traits and job-related characteristic criteria, which will provide a basis for predicting potentiality and suitability for future duties, rather than traits and job-related characteristics which were historically applicable. Failure to recognize this may not completely deter chance development of the right man, but the danger is it may develop a leader with truncated, endogenous characteristics completely inapplicable to the higher leadership environment. This has happened in the past with the "trench warfare general" and "battleship admirals" causing just enough friction to retard progress. Planned performance must place primary emphasis on the attainment of pre-defined goals with forward-looking, implicit standards, which will support the contention "if he is effective today, he is constructively preparing for tomorrow."

There is a growing need for reporting seniors to actively counsel or coach their subordinates relative to performance of duty through some type of informal counseling technique. Although the trend in the use of this technique has received growing acceptance, has been successful in private industry, and is practiced by the other military services, the Marine Corps has no formal plan of appraisal counseling. This is the most serious deficiency of the career appraisal system, but little likelihood of its correction, or even acknowledgment that its promulgation is imminent, has been ferreted out during the period of this study. The preparation of the younger officers for greater responsibility cannot be accomplished by



pyramiding successive layers of responsibility without some attempt to assess performance and to provide the individual "feedback" so that he might adjust his performance.

The concept of an organization hierarchy, based on the cone principle, implies recognition that everyone inducted at the bottom cannot rise to the top. The extent to which the career management system is successful in identifying, assigning, promoting, and schooling the best men, not just the excellent ones, depends on perspicacious appraisal. The danger is that the Marine Corps may lose the individual behind a façade of huge impersonal systems which glorify the total image, rather than recognizes the individual officer. The key to an effective organization is the quality of its leadership at all levels and the ability to attract able and promising young men and, by intelligent, rational, consistent processes of career management, move them up from the bottom of the hierarchy according to ability.

In order to provide more effective support of the career management program by the philosophy and methodology of appraisal, attention should be directed to relevant appraisal consideration and the examination of both broad and specific areas suggesting need of further improvement in this regard. An attempt should be made to encourage senior-subordinate counseling through the medium of the appraisal instrument. Additionally, an effort to rationalize the results of the appraisal report by some method of indexing or weighting reporting seniors as appraisers is suggested as a means of increasing the validity and comparability of appraisal reports. Both ideas should be encompassed in an approach to appraisal which is less subjectively oriented, less dependent on biased judgmental factors, and more oriented





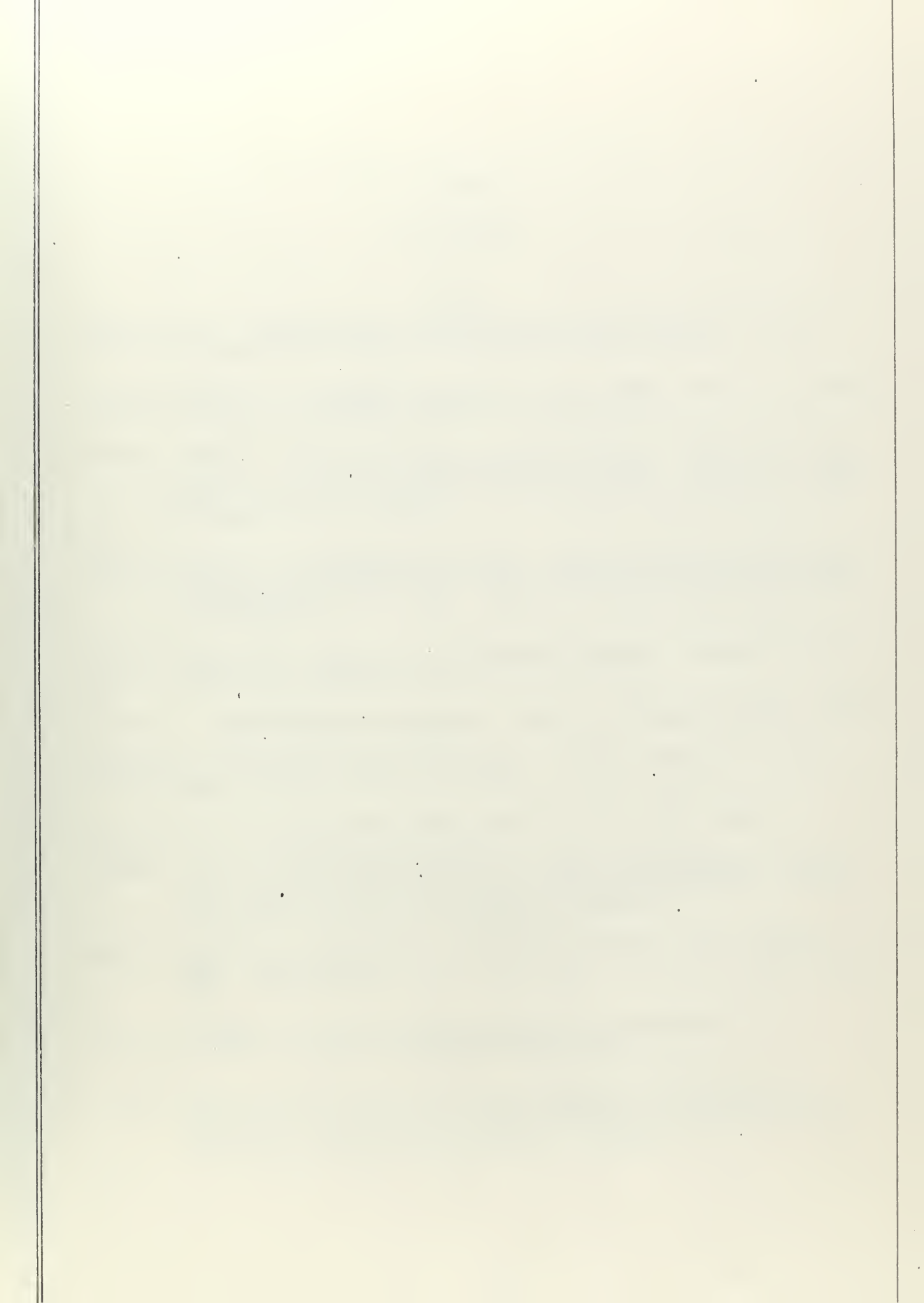
towards objective performance and individual growth which looms importantly in appraisal methodology.

There needs to be a general recognition that development of the individual officer's potentialities must occur within a context of values, which are equally dependent on organizational policies and dynamic senior-subordinate interpersonal relationships. This could possibly be incorporated in an education program to broaden the stereotyped notions of what constitutes ability or talent, and the role of appraisal in the identification and development of these attributes in our future leaders.

Additional research opportunities have been revealed during the preparation of this paper. This research should be directed toward appraisal variables as they interact with the overall career planning program and with the organizational setting in which appraisal is accomplished. Specifically, these areas are considered significant for additional investigation:

- (a) A longitudinal - extending into time sufficiently to reveal facts about organizational adaptation—extrapolation of historical trait characteristics into some future environment to measure their applicability as leadership-producing standards.
- (b) Behavioral impacts of the unrevealed appraisal results on the formal and informal organizational setting.
- (c) Judgmental ability as a corollary to other specific characteristics or traits of reporting seniors.
- (d) An effective method for indexing reporting seniors' appraisals based on history of prior appraisals.







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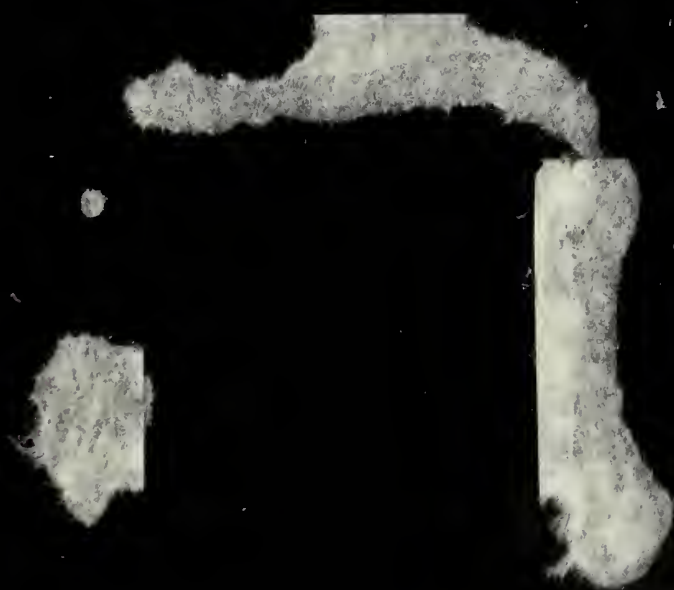
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